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Smarthinking Writer's Handbook AU/NZ

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Chapter 1: Understanding Your Writing Assignment
Section 1: Essay Prompt and Purpose

Analysing the Prompt
Chapter 1, Section 1, Lesson 1

Completing a writing assignment involves many steps, and the first step should usually consist of analysing the assignment prompt. This step involves reading the assignment instructions carefully to determine how they apply to various parts of the final draft. The assignment instructions for an essay may not explicitly say how to organise and develop your ideas, but they usually include keywords and clues that can help you figure out which pattern of development and types of details are appropriate. Before writing a draft, determine the requirements and/or your best options for each of the following aspects of writing the essay:

- Essay Length
- Main Topic
- Introduction
- Body Paragraph Topics
- Supporting Evidence
- Formatting and References
- Conclusion

The following sections describe how to analyse an assignment prompt and how the prompt might affect each of these aspects of an essay.

Essay Length

Instructions or assignment prompts may specify the required length in one of two formats: a page range or a word count. The length requirements are important because they can help you to decide how many paragraphs to include in your draft, which will help you to plan your body paragraph topics before writing. In a typical academic essay, each paragraph is usually ½ to ¾ page in length because the ideas should be well-developed. To determine how many paragraphs your essay might include, you can use the page range or word-count requirements as follows.

- **Page range:** Divide the number of required pages by .75 (because each paragraph could be up to ¾ of a page). For example, a three-page essay will usually consist of five well-developed paragraphs. A proactive approach might be to plan six paragraph topics to ensure that there are enough ideas to develop and to later omit your least-favourite body paragraph topic if the draft is at risk of exceeding the maximum length.
- **Word count:** Some assignments do not specific page requirements but rather a word count. In this situation, use the word count to determine the required number of pages. A typical, double-spaced page of typing is 300 words. If you divide the word count by 300, you can get a rough estimate of how many pages the essay should include and get a general idea of how many paragraphs you might plan.

Main Topic

Many assignments will specify a topic, but some assignments will allow you to choose a topic within a broader topic or set of parameters. When you receive the assignment, make sure that you understand what specific topic or type of main topic is required. The following examples demonstrate the difference between prompts that establish the main topic for you and prompts that allow some choice within a broader category.

Prompts that Specify the Main Topic:

- *Critically assess several research-based practices that parents can use to help their children become effective regulators of their own emotions. 2000 words. APA style.* (Each student completing the assignment will write about practices for helping children regulate emotions.)

- *Should police have tertiary qualifications? Why or why not?* (The assigned task is to either defend reasons why police *should* have tertiary qualifications or reasons why police *should not* have tertiary qualifications.)
- *Is surveillance of the Internet effective?* (The assigned task is to either defend reasons why surveillance is effective or reasons why surveillance is not effective.)

Prompts that Involve Choosing a Main Topic:

- *Choose a technology applicable to Human Resources and analyse how it impacts the efficacy of one HR goal or task.* (The writer will choose a specific technology and an HR goal or task for which the technology is used.)
- *Describe a potential research project to investigate an engineering problem.* (The student will choose both the engineering problem and a research project.)
- *Analyse the development of the protagonist in a work of short fiction from the course anthology.* (The writer may choose any story from the course anthology and will write about the main character.)

Introduction

After you determine the main topic requirements, you might also consider how the assignment requirements should affect your essay's introduction. The introduction should usually include a sentence that summarises your main idea or purpose (often referred to as a thesis statement), but it should usually also include the background information that readers need to know about the topic. For example, in an essay that analyses a character in a short story of the writer's choosing, the writer should identify the story's author, title, premise and main character before stating a main idea about how the character has changed.

An assignment prompt might also include a list of questions to answer in the essay, and one of those questions might be most appropriate for the introduction. When you see a list of questions, check to see if the first one or two apply to background information as opposed to questions that apply more to the body of the essay. For example, suppose the assignment prompt said this: *Reflect on an event during your practicum when you demonstrated effective communication with a patient. What was the main context or premise for the interaction? Which of the communication techniques did you use, and how are those techniques supported by the theories we have studied? How confident are you about communicating effectively with future patients?* An appropriate place to answer the question about the context or premise is the introduction. The second question applies more to the body paragraphs, and the last question applies to the conclusion.

Body Paragraph Topics

After you determine the main topic requirements, you can begin to decide what types of body paragraph topics are appropriate. For some assignments, all of the body paragraphs will fall into the same rhetorical mode, such as arguing a position or describing effects. For example, if an assignment prompt requires you to argue whether *surveillance of the Internet is effective,* then each body paragraph should probably defend a separate reason for your opinion. Therefore, you could start working on your assignment by choosing a few separate reasons to research and develop later in the first draft of your essay. The following examples show how assignment prompts can help you to determine the most appropriate types of body paragraph topics for assignments that use one main pattern of development or rhetorical mode.

Critically assess several research-based practices that parents can use to help their children become effect regulators of their own emotions.

- Introduction
- First practice ____________
- Second practice__________
- Third practice____________
- Fourth practice __________
- Conclusion

Choose a technology applicable to Human Resources and analyse how it impacts the efficacy of one HR goal or task.

- Introduction
- First effect ___________
- Second effect_________
- Third effect___________
- Fourth effect__________
- Conclusion

These examples each include spaces where a student could plan four body paragraph topics, but this number is for demonstration purposes only. The required length should ultimately affect your decision about how many body paragraph topics to plan and develop.

Other more complex essay assignments might require you to include more than one type of body paragraph topic. Consider how the following prompt corresponds to an essay plan.

Write a summary report of the listeria outbreak that includes the history, microorganism's role, implications to communities, and methods for control and prevention.

- Introduction
- History of the outbreak
- The microorganism's role in the outbreak
- First implication for communities
- Second implication for communities
- First method of control and prevention
- Second method of control and prevention
- Third method of control and prevention
- Conclusion

In this example, the writer used each required category of body paragraph topics as well as prior knowledge of the topic to decide how many paragraphs might be needed to develop each part of the assignment.

Supporting Evidence

In any academic essay, each body paragraph should include evidence to support or develop each body paragraph topic. Academic assignments will usually require that evidence to come from credible or scholarly sources and perhaps even your required course texts. After you determine what types of body paragraph topics are required, determine what type of evidence your essay should include and where you might begin looking for that evidence. You might even jot down a list of objectives for each body paragraph to achieve. For example, a student whose assignment is to *critically assess several research-based practices that parents can use to help their children become effect regulators of their own emotions* could plan the following objectives for each body paragraph:

- Identify one research-based practice.
- Describe what actions or steps the practice involves.
- Explain how well (*critically assess*) the practice leads to the desired outcome (*regulating emotions*).

Formatting and References

If your assignment instructions specify APA, Harvard, Chicago or MLA, the finished product should follow those formatting and referencing guidelines. When one of these styles is required, make sure that you understand how that affects formatting aspects, such as the title page, page numbering, font size, spacing and so forth. You can usually apply the formatting during a later stage of the writing process; however, you will want to apply the referencing requirements during the drafting stage of the writing process.

Referencing requirements determine how you give credit to outside sources when you quote or paraphrase other writers' ideas. For example, if you are using Harvard or APA, you will want

to cite the author(s) and year(s) of publication each time you paraphrase ideas and the author(s), year(s) and page(s) each time you use a direct quotation. This is helpful to know before writing a draft because you may want to keep a research log as you read outside sources and gather evidence. If you keep a list of ideas you want to quote or paraphrase in the draft, it will be helpful to record the information you need for referencing each paraphrase or quotation.

Conclusion

Before writing a draft, you might also consider how the instructions should affect the conclusion. A common practice with conclusions is to summarise the ideas you will have covered in the body paragraphs and connect your topic to a larger purpose or context. Some assignment prompts include a list of questions, and one of those questions might apply to the conclusion. An assignment prompt may also provide specific instructions for the conclusion. For example, suppose the assignment prompt said this: *Reflect on an event during your practicum when you demonstrated effective communication with a patient. What was the main context or premise for the interaction? Which of the communication techniques did you use, and how are those techniques supported by the theories we have studied? How confident are you about communicating effectively with future patients?* An appropriate place to answer question *How confident are you about communicating effectively with future patients?* might be the conclusion.

Think About It

- How long should the final draft be, and how many paragraphs might that entail?
- What main topic is required, or what topic choices are appropriate?
- What type(s) of body paragraph topics are appropriate?
- What type of evidence should you gather for each body paragraph?
- How should you introduce the topic in your introduction?
- What type of closure or summary should you provide in the conclusion?

When writers consider these questions before they start to write, the writing process tends to go more smoothly.

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Chapter 1, Section 2: Academic Writing Tasks

Arguing a Position
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 1

Arguing a position is the most common task in academic writing. Many essay assignments will require you to defend a position with a variety of logical reasons. The positions that you may be asked to defend should usually be debatable. Some assignments may require you to focus exclusively on defending a position while other complex assignments may entail defending a position in addition to other writing tasks. Argument tasks can take many forms, such as the following:

- Evaluating the effectiveness or safety of a current policy or program (e.g., *Critically assess the impact of 1:1 laptop initiatives on writing assessment for adolescent learners* or *How well does the Atkins diet meet the Australian Dietary Guidelines?*)
- Defending a position about whether a requirement or law should be in place (e.g., *Should police have tertiary qualifications?*)
- Assessing the validity or accuracy of a theory (e.g., *Does the platform economy theory accurately reflect the current nature of the retail industry?*)

The discussion below covers the main strategies and essay components that work well for arguing a position.

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Essay Structure

Defending a position usually involves developing a separate body paragraph for each of your reasons or *lines of argument*. You can start preparing for your argument essay or the argument portion of a longer essay by choosing (1) the main argument and (2) a few specific reasons why the argument is justified or valid. Your reasons should detail why readers should support your position. Planning your lines of argument before writing a first draft can make the drafting process easier. Below is an example of how one might plan lines of argument for the assignment prompt *Critically assess the impact of 1:1 laptop initiatives on writing assessment for adolescent learners.*

Main Argument: The use of 1:1 laptop initiatives has positively impacted several aspects of writing instruction and assessment for adolescent learners.

Essay Structure:

- Introduction
- Historical overview of using 1:1 laptops for writing assessment
- How laptops improve engagement via multi-media content
- How laptops expand the range of possible writing assessments
- How laptops facilitate student participation in the writing process
- How laptops enable educators to deliver personalised feedback
- How laptops improve access to academic support services
- Conclusion

When planning your lines of argument, consider the best way to order them in the body of the essay. For example, do you want to place your most compelling or significant reason first or last? In addition to planning your lines of argument before writing, you might ask a tutor or your lecturer for feedback about your essay plan.

Introduction Paragraph

Most argument essays begin with an overview of the topic and the debate, convincing readers that the debate is significant enough to consider. This background information might demonstrate your familiarity with the debate. You might begin the introduction by describing the immediate relevance of your topic and then indicate how or why people within a certain population or discipline might take different stances on that topic. For example, one might explain that educators and policy makers must weigh the costs versus benefits of 1:1 laptop initiatives, explaining how professionals view the impact of laptops on student writing outcomes. For many topics, it can be helpful to summarise the debate before stating your own specific stance.

By the end of your introduction, your specific stance should be clear. For example, this sentence summarises a writer's view on the debate about laptops: *The use of 1:1 laptop initiatives has positively impacted several aspects of writing instruction and assessment for adolescent learners*. This sentence is often referred to as a thesis statement. For complex topics, you may need more than one sentence to summarise your main argument.

Body Paragraphs

The reasons or *lines of argument* make up the foundation of an effective argument. Unless your assignment says otherwise, most of the body paragraphs should focus on reasons why your position is valid. Each reason usually needs to be developed in a separate section or body paragraph. (For an essay that is five pages or less, you can probably develop each reason in a single paragraph.) One way to develop these types of body paragraphs is by following a three-step process:

- Begin the body paragraph with a sentence that states the reason the paragraph will develop. A common term for this first sentence is a 'topic sentence'. For example, the first line of argument about laptops could begin with the following topic sentence: *one way in which laptops positively impact student learning is by providing access to multi-media presentations that are inherently more engaging to adolescents than non-digital instructional formats.*

- Provide several pieces of logical evidence to prove the reason is accurate. Each assignment requires different types of evidence. For most assignments and in most academic disciplines, that evidence should come from reliable experts who have studied the issue through original research or who have the credentials to participate in the conversation. This might consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical writings or reports from government or professional organisations. Each time you mention a fact from another source, make sure that you cite the source of that information in the text of your paper.

- Explain why the evidence supports your main argument. A typical line of argument usually includes some analysis about why certain facts or details indicate that the main argument is valid.

In addition to lines of argument, some essays that argue a position include information about the opposing viewpoints. These are sometimes referred to as counterarguments. Writers sometimes acknowledge or refute the opposition's lines of argument in one or more paragraphs before or after the lines of argument. Another technique is to acknowledge opposing viewpoints within the individual lines of argument for which each viewpoint is relevant. Including this information can show readers that your argument is based on knowledge of other viewpoints. However, counterarguments are not always required or even appropriate for all types of arguments. Refer to your lecturer or assignment prompt to determine the necessity of counterarguments.

Conclusion Paragraph

Most argument essays conclude with a summary of key points and some hope regarding the topic or a sense of urgency to support the writer's position. An argument's conclusion may include the following parts:

- A reminder of the main argument or main opinion
- A summary of the most significant reasons why the opinion is worth considering
- Insight about how the main argument serves the greater good or the larger field of inquiry
- Policy recommendations or future implications

The type of information that works best for each conclusion will vary according to your argument's overall purpose and the academic discipline.

Think About It

- What is the larger context or purpose of considering your topic?
- What main stance or position should readers accept or understand by the end of your essay?
- What lines of argument are the most relevant or convincing?
- What evidence will show that these reasons are worth considering or well-informed?

Answering these questions will help you to brainstorm ideas for your introduction, main idea, lines of argument and conclusion.

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Writing About Causes and/or Effects
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 2

Writing about causes and/or effects is a common task in academic essays. Some assignments will focus on writing about causes only, effects only or a combination of both. Other more complex assignments may require you to write about causes or effects along with other aspects of a topic. The overall goal is to demonstrate understanding of what causes a situation, an event or a phenomenon and/or the aftereffects. The task of describing causes or effects is common in history, science and social science courses. In some cases, the goal of writing about effects is to support a position in a

debate. Your writing prompt will help you decide how many causes and/or effects that you should write about and what purpose your discussion serves.

This lesson will focus on the basic strategies and tools for describing causes and/or effects. The 'Body Paragraph Development' section will be helpful to writers working on complex essays that require details about causes and/or effects along with other aspects of a larger topic.

Essay Structure

When an essay is focused exclusively on describing causes and/or effects, it will usually be organised with an introduction, a few body paragraphs and a conclusion. The first step is to decide which causes and/or effects that you want to discuss. Some assignments require a combination of causes and effects, but others will require causes only or effects only. For example, if your purpose is to discuss how social media affects human social behaviour, each body paragraph would focus on a separate effect. Noting or listing the causes or effects before writing a first draft can make the drafting process simpler. For example, one way to prepare for an assignment on the effects of social media or the causes of the Great Depression is to complete an outline like one of these.

Effects of Smartphones	**Causes of the Great Depression in Australia**
I. Introduction paragraph II. First effect: _____________ III. Second effect: ___________ IV. Third effect: _____________ V. Fourth effect: _____________ VI. Conclusion paragraph	I. Introduction paragraph II. First cause: ______________ III. Second cause: ___________ IV. Third cause: _____________ V. Fourth cause: _____________ VI. Conclusion paragraph

Before making an outline, verify whether the body paragraphs should focus on causes, effects or both, and check the required length to help you decide how many body paragraphs are necessary. There is no magic rule insisting that every cause and effect essay should discuss three or four causes or effects, so use your own discretion. You may want to share an outline with a tutor or your lecturer for feedback about the overall plan before writing the first draft.

Introduction Paragraph

Most cause and effect essays begin with an introduction paragraph that establishes a clear topic and a strong purpose for exploring certain causes and/or effects. The introduction should convince readers that the underlying causes or major effects are worth reading about. It also usually gives enough background information about the topic to prepare readers for the thesis. The following questions can help you decide what information readers need to find in your introduction:

- Why is this topic significant?
- Who or what does it usually involve?
- Where, when or how often does the situation occur?

Each type of topic requires slightly different background information. Your introduction may also need to include a sentence or two that states the main idea of the essay, which is sometimes referred to as a thesis statement. The thesis statement will help readers to understand whether the essay will discuss causes, effects or both. For some essays, you may need to explain to readers why they should be concerned about causes or effects; for other essays, you may need to convince readers that there is a cause-and-effect connection between events. Consider these examples:

- Thesis statement for an essay about causes: *The Great Depression in Australia was caused by several global economic factors and domestic economic policies.*
- Thesis statement for an essay about effects: *The widespread use of smartphones has led to several detrimental effects on the social behaviours of adolescents.*

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The first example focuses on causes of the Great Depression, and the second example focuses on effects. The assignment instructions will usually give clues about what type of thesis statement is appropriate.

Body Paragraph Development

When writing about causes, effects or both, each body paragraph usually begins with a sentence that states the cause or effect the paragraph will develop and the connection to the essay's main idea. This sentence is usually referred to as a topic sentence. For example, the second topic sentence in a paper about the Great Depression might begin as follows:

- *The Premiers' Plan of 1931 also contributed to a weaker Australian economy.*

The words 'contributed to' make it obvious that the paragraph will focus on a particular event that caused the Great Depression.

After each topic sentence, the body paragraph should include evidence that proves the cause or effect happened or will happen and explanations about why the cause or effect has a causal relationship to the main topic. Readers need to see facts and details to convince them that certain causes or effects are plausible. For example, if you wanted to show that Smartphones have led to a decline in social gatherings, you would need to include statistics or examples that support the idea that teen social gatherings have declined since the proliferation of Smartphones. You would also need to explain exactly why Smartphones affect social gatherings. No matter what kind of details you use, your supporting sentences will show cause and effect with words such as *because, as a result, due to, therefore, consequently, stems from, causes, affects, leads to, results in* and *effects*.

Conclusion Paragraph

Papers that discuss causes and/or effects often end with a conclusion paragraph that achieves three goals:

- Summarises the most significant causes or effects from the body paragraphs
- Reminds readers of why the topic is worth understanding
- Explains the outcomes that can be achieved or avoided by understanding the causes and/or effects

As with most papers, the conclusion should avoid introducing new information, in this case, new causes or effects.

Think About It

- Of all the possible causes and/or effects of your topic, which ones will be the most useful, interesting or surprising for your readers?
- How do you know that these causes or effects are accurate?
- How will your readers benefit from knowing about these causes or effects?

Answering these questions will help you brainstorm ideas for body paragraph topics and supporting details as you begin working on your draft.

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Comparing and Contrasting
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 3

How is one business practice different from another? Why should one set of ethical practices suit a specific situation but not another? Comparing and contrasting is a regular part of everyday life, and people from all disciplines use comparisons for decision making and critically thinking about their work.

Comparing and contrasting in writing is a valuable tool. Some assignments will focus specifically on comparing and contrasting, and others might have a step that requires a basic comparison of different topics to determine their similarities and/or differences before applying those similarities and differences to a larger step. The overall goal of comparing and contrasting, regardless of the discipline, remains the same: determining how two or more topics are similar and/or different. Your prompt can help you decide if your end goal is to draw attention to those similarities and/or differences or to use them to build up to a larger task, such as taking a stance about which topic is 'better' in a given situation or best suited to a specific need.

This lesson will focus on the basic strategies and tools for developing an essay that effectively compares and contrasts topics. The 'Body Paragraph Development' section will be of value to writers working on complex essays that require one or more paragraphs that compare and/or contrast topics.

Essay Structure

When an essay is focused exclusively on comparing and contrasting different topics, it will usually be organised into an introduction, two or more body paragraphs and a conclusion. The first step is to decide which similarities and/or differences you want to discuss. You might want to start by brainstorming several similarities and differences and then narrowing the list to three or four that will make the essay informative or convincing. Some lecturers require students to discuss a combination of similarities and differences, but you can often discuss only similarities or only differences. For example, if your purpose is to contrast two qualitative studies to determine which is more rigorous, you might choose to describe the differences in data collection, analysis and reporting without mentioning the similarities in their research plans or methodology.

The body of the essay is usually organised in one of two ways: (1) block structure or (2) point-by-point. In an essay using the blocked style, the writer will provide all the details about Topic A and then all the details about Topic B. In an essay that uses the point-by-point structure, each body paragraph focuses on a similarity or difference. Here is an example of how each format works for an essay about two studies: Smith's and Timmon's.

Block	Point-by-Point
I. Introduction paragraph II. Smith a. Data collection b. Analysis c. Reporting III. Timmon a. Data collection b. Analysis c. Reporting IV. Conclusion paragraph	I. Introduction paragraph II. Differences in data collection a. Smith b. Timmon III. Differences in analysis a. Smith b. Timmon IV. Differences in reporting a. Smith b. Timmon V. Conclusion paragraph

Each Roman numeral represents one paragraph. As you can see, the paragraphs in both formats follow a consistent pattern of development so that readers can understand the ideas more easily. Often, it's difficult to know which format is better for your topic, but the lecturer, prompt and course textbook can help you decide.

Introduction Paragraph

The introduction paragraph in an essay that compares and contrasts topics establishes your reason for examining the two (or more) topics together; in other words, it helps readers understand why you've chosen to evaluate the topics you have. Consider the following:

- *In exploring the well-being of first-year university students, both Smith (2016) and Timmon (2015) have conducted qualitative studies at Sandstone universities. The two studies, despite using similar methodologies, uncovered vastly different results in student well-being and the factors that influence it. With such different results, it is important to consider the rigour of*

each study to determine which is most valuable in planning first-year programming to improve retention.

- *Reality television shows that showcase the talents of individuals have become increasingly popular. In these shows, contestants must perform with various restrictions in front of a live audience and judges who cast votes to determine who will move on to the next level and who will be deemed the best. Two of the most recent talent-based reality shows include* Australia's Got Talent *and* The Voice*.*

These are only partial introductions, but they show how each writer begins to establish a clear context and purpose for looking at two topics in the same category.

In addition to context, your introduction will provide background details on the two topics. For example, readers might need the answer to a few questions about the reality shows:

- Who are the contestants?
- What is the object of each competition?
- Where and when can viewers see the shows?

Your introduction will possibly conclude with a sentence or two that state the main idea of the essay, sometimes called the thesis statement, which will include the characteristics that you want to contrast or compare. This thesis statement will help the reader to understand if the paper will discuss similarities, differences or both; what the main idea of the paper is; and what information the body paragraphs will discuss in more detail. Here are a few variations based on the studies example:

- To determine which study is more rigorous, one should consider the differences in data collection, analysis and reporting between Smith's and Timmon's studies. **[contrast only]**
- Both Smith's and Timmon's studies offer a high degree of rigour based on their methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, making each useful in its own way. **[comparison only]**
- While both studies collected data and analysed it in similar ways, Smith's and Timmon's studies differed greatly in how the researchers reported their findings. **[comparison and contrast]**

Check your prompt from your lecturer: it will usually provide specific information about the goals of your assignment.

Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs often start with a sentence that clarifies the overall point or goal of the paragraph and how the paragraph fits into the essay as a whole. This sentence is usually referred to as a topic sentence. For instance, consider the comparison and contrast sentence above. The writer's topic sentences might look like this:

Body Paragraph 1: *Both Smith's and Timmon's studies used one-on-one interviews to collect data.*
Body Paragraph 2: *Additionally, the two studies analysed their data using similar methods of analyses.*
Body Paragraph 3: *However, the two researchers differed in how they reported their findings.*

These topic sentences clarify the focus of each of the body paragraphs, allowing the reader to more easily see how each factors into the writer's overall discussion.

After a topic sentence that sets a focus for the body paragraph, writers should develop supporting details that help to describe how each characteristic applies to the two topics. These details will need to be specific enough to convince readers that the similarities or differences are both accurate and significant, which means you will probably need a few sentences about each similarity or difference within the two topics. For example, a paragraph about data collection of the two studies would include a few sentences about the collection of data during Smith's study and a few more sentences about the data collection in Timmon's study. You might even want to explain why those characteristics and

details are worth considering. For example, a paragraph about data collection would answer questions like *What impact does the method of data collection have on rigour?* or *How do different methods of data collection alter the reliability of the data?*

Conclusion Paragraph

When a paper compares and contrasts topics, the conclusion paragraph often does the following things:

- Reviews the two topics together
- Summarises the similarities and/or differences that are most significant
- Reminds the readers of what can be learned or gained by examining the two topics

Ending a compare and contrast essay with this information will allow readers to remember and use the information in the future.

Think About It

- Why do you want to explore how these topics are similar and/or different?
- Which similarities and/or differences are most useful to consider?
- Which details show readers what each similarity and/or difference looks like in real life?

Answering these questions will help you brainstorm ideas for your main idea and body paragraphs. The task of comparing and contrasting can be challenging, but it is often also enjoyable and relevant to everyday life.

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Analysing Literature
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 4

Have you ever watched a movie or TV show for a second time and noticed details that weren't obvious the first time? Have you ever been so intrigued by a show or movie that you wanted to watch it multiple times to find out what it *really* means? Writing a literary analysis requires the same type of contemplation but through reading instead of watching. Literary analysis essays can take many different forms, but they all involve looking closely at a piece of literature. The word *analyse* means *to break into parts.* Writing an effective analysis usually involves reading the text several times to find clues about why it has a certain effect on readers. The most basic version of a literary analysis will require that you explain how an author uses one or more literary devices to develop a theme. A few common features of analysing literary devices are described below, but each assignment may vary.

Essay Structure

When an assignment requires you to focus on literary devices, the overall purpose is to explain how the literary devices make a theme more obvious. The theme is the message or insight the author is trying to express. For example, some argue that the theme of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is that social hierarchies are illogical and harmful. The author communicates the theme through the use of literary devices, techniques such as setting, characterisation, imagery, symbolism or irony. Some lecturers may expect you to discuss a different literary device in each body paragraph so that the essay as a whole describes multiple writing techniques. Other assignments may require you to explore one literary device more deeply, in which case the essay might focus each body paragraph on a different example of the literary device. The structure for two possible methods of analysing literary devices in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee are outlined below.

Analysing Multiple Literary Devices	Analysing One Literary Device
I. Introduction paragraph	I. Introduction paragraph

II. How the setting supports the theme III. How characters support the theme IV. How irony supports the theme V. Conclusion paragraph	II. How the character Scout supports the theme III. How Atticus supports the theme IV. How Bob supports the theme V. How Tom supports the theme VI. Conclusion paragraph

Many writers create an outline of paragraph topics before writing a first draft. Choosing the body paragraph topics usually requires a second close reading of the text.

Introduction Paragraph

A literary analysis usually begins with an introduction that prepares readers for the body paragraphs. An introduction provides important background information about the author, title, subject and theme. One popular strategy is to summarise why the text is important and what the text is about. Just as you needed to understand the basic content and premise of the text before analysing it, your readers need to know what the text is about before learning about the literary devices. Thus, an introduction to a literary analysis usually answers these types of questions.

Fiction	Poetry
• What main work (title and author) has a special significance to people and why? • What main theme does the text explore? • When and where does the story take place? • What main characters does the text mostly follow? • What type of conflict or situation does the text mostly describe?	• Which poem (title and author) has a special historical, social or thematic significance and why? • What main theme does the poem explore? • Who is the speaker of the poem? • What main images are described? • What if any action takes place? • Which form or style is mostly used?

Each story, poem or play will lend itself to different types of background details.

An introduction to a literary analysis also usually includes a main idea statement, commonly referred to as a thesis statement. The thesis statement usually gives the main theme of the work and an indication of which literary device(s) enhance(s) the theme. Each of the following examples corresponds to one of the sample outlines in the *Essay Structure* section above:

- *Lee uses setting, characterisation, and irony to demonstrate the illogical and harmful nature of social hierarchies.* (Each body paragraph would focus on a different literary device.)
- *Lee develops her theme about the illogical and harmful nature of social hierarchies through the use of characterisation.* (Each body paragraph would focus on a different example of characterisation.)

Body Paragraphs

In traditional literary analyses, you should begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence to help readers understand which example or literary device the paragraph will discuss. The topic sentences usually remind readers of the work's main theme as well. For example, an analysis of multiple literary devices in *To Kill a Mockingbird* could include topic sentences like these:

- *One way that Lee develops her theme about social hierarchy is by setting her story in the 1950s in a rural southern town in the United States, a time and location that were notorious for social and economic prejudices.*
- *Lee also shows the problems with social hierarchy through the development of several characters.*
- *Several examples of irony also cause readers to question the logic of social hierarchies.*

Each topic sentence would begin a different body paragraph, and all of the sentences after each topic sentence would focus on the same literary device that it mentions.

After each topic sentence, supporting details describe and quote specific places in the text where a literary device is present. To provide this level of detail, you may need to read the text a third or fourth time. If each body paragraph focuses on a different literary device, then the supporting details will show a few different examples of the literary device. You can achieve this by either quoting or paraphrasing the original text. For example, a body paragraph about setting will describe a few passages of the novel where its time or location are mentioned. While re-reading, you might write the topic of each body paragraph on a different sheet of paper and record relevant quotations for each body paragraph. After each paraphrase or quotation, you should explain how the example is relevant to the theme. In other words, why is each example consistent with the message readers should get from the poem or story?

Conclusion

A conclusion to a traditional literary analysis tends to summarise the main literary device(s) and elaborate on the theme. First, you might remind readers of the main devices or examples that make the theme most apparent. To take the conclusion further, you could also explain why the theme is worth considering and why it makes the text more memorable or significant. Consider the following questions when concluding this type of analysis:

- What theme is most prevalent throughout the text?
- Why does this theme make the piece especially poignant or valuable?
- What can readers gain by exploring this theme?

Much like the conclusion for other types of analyses, the conclusion to an explication tends to elaborate on the larger theme. For example, your conclusion might explain how the poem helps readers see a theme or subject in a new way.

Think About It

- What types of literary devices are used that you would like to write about?
- Which literary devices are most relevant to the writer's theme?
- How should topic sentences show readers the structure you want to accomplish?

Use these questions to begin planning and organising your ideas. As you create your analysis, remember to provide plenty of evidence from the story or poem so that readers understand why you came to your conclusions.

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Film and Television Analysis
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 5

Preparing the Analysis (Setting the Stage)

You've been asked to analyse a film or television show, either as a stand-alone task or as a part of a larger assignment, and you may find yourself wondering what that means. Analysing film and television means considering an artefact and determining what parts of it are effective or ineffective and why. You may also need to include a brief summary of the show or film to help your reader understand what you are saying, but at its root, a film or television analysis is asking you to critically think about a film or television show, its message and how it conveys that message; then, you must help your reader understand how the film or show conveys its message by using illustrations from it. The following steps can help you begin the process of effectively analysing a film or show:

- Watch the film/show several times so you notice more details.
- Take notes while watching, pausing whenever you need.
- Identify the film's/show's genre.
- Decide which elements you would like to analyse.

Just as books and music can be grouped into categories or *genres*, films fall into several genres also. A genre is a subgroup or category. In music, for example, classical is one of many genres, and in literature, historical fiction is one of many genres. Recognising the genre of the film or television show is often the first step toward analysing it.

While this lesson primarily discusses films and offers examples of films, the same elements can be considered when exploring television shows.

Common Genres

The most common film genres include the following:

- *Action*: High-energy films that often include fight and chase sequences and physical stunts
- *Adventure*: Rousing, fast-moving films that chronicle new experiences or journeys
- *Comedy*: Light-hearted funny films
- *Documentary*: Fact-based films about a life or an event
- *Drama*: Fictional films featuring realistic circumstances and serious topics
- *Horror*: Scary, edge-of-your-seat films
- *Musical*: Song-driven plots
- *Romance*: Touching love stories
- *Science Fiction*: Futuristic experiences and characters

Some films will mix genres, of course, but you can identify the genre by paying close attention early in the film. What details of time period and location do you notice? What feelings does the music create? How do the characters relate to one another? Once you better understand the genre, you can analyse some elements of the film or television show.

Elements for Analysis

Directing

Some directors are so intimately involved that the resulting film or show reflects their style or 'touch'. For instance, think of how you can always tell you are watching a Quentin Tarantino, Woody Allen or Ingmar Bergman movie. What is the director's style? How does this director relate to the actors? Does the director serve any other roles in the film (i.e., producer, choreographer, etc.)? In what ways are the director's other films similar to this one?

Storyline or Plot

A film's plot is what most viewers remember. What does the background information tell viewers about the characters or storyline? Why do the conflicts make viewers want to continue watching? What creates tension in the film? Why did the screenwriter or filmmaker end the film in the way he or she did?

Camera Angles

Examine the camera angles and shot lengths. Are you, the viewer, looking up, looking down or looking straight at a scene? How does this affect the viewing of the scene? Why would a director want to make a character or place seem bigger or smaller? Does the film use many long, bird's-eye views or close-up shots? What are the purposes of these kinds of shots? Think of how action films like *The Avengers* often introduce large cities with extreme long shots taken from helicopters. Why would these shots be chosen? On the other hand, why would a director use close-up shots for particular scenes involving two people?

Camera Movement

The way a camera moves plays a role in the film, too; the motion may be sharp, choppy, smooth, and so on. In essence, the camera can become its own 'character'. For example, hand-held cameras can

be used for fight and chase scenes to make them more violent and fast-moving. Does the camera ever seem shaky? What would this achieve in a particular scene? Are hand-held cameras ever used? What effect does this have? How does the camera 'follow' the action?

Lighting
Filmmakers play on human emotions, including a natural fear of the dark and feelings of peace and calm that accompany sunlight. Other shades and tones can indicate specific feelings or elicit responses. Changes in lighting may be used to indicate flashbacks or to reveal a character's emotions. Near the end of *The Return of the King*, for example, the knights that come to the aid of the city of Gondor are accompanied by a rising sun sweeping away the clouds, symbolising the defeat of the forces of darkness. How are light and dark used in the film? When do you notice changes in dominant colours from scene to scene? Pay attention to sunrises, sunsets and shadows—what could their purposes be?

Acting
Whether you're watching an A-list actor or an unknown, the performance makes the film in most cases. In what ways do the actors make their characters seem real? How do the actors use their voices and gestures to create the scene? How does their portrayal of the characters affect the way viewers understand the story? How do the roles differ from their 'typical' roles?

Symbols
Like literature, some films include symbols. What images appear repeatedly? Why were they chosen? What could they stand for?

Sound Effects
Sound effects play a significant role in almost every film, and even silence has meaning. How do these sound effects help viewers better understand what is happening in the story? Which effects are most powerful? How often does the movie use silence and to what effect?

Visual Effects
Visual effects include a broad group of categories, from green screen to detailed costumes that suit a particular time period or setting to the computer graphics (CG) animations that bring fictional creatures to life. Since films are pre-eminently visual, consider analysing the power of the visuals, costumes or settings. How much effort was put into realistic costumes? What details stand out? What locations were used for filming? What roles do those locations play? Was CG used? What made it effective or distracting? What effects are most powerful or leave something to be desired?

Music
Well-written musical scores tell the story as much as the actors and scenery do. Think of the deep bass sounds in *Jaws* or the rousing music that accompanies the action in *Gladiator*. In musicals, songs are central to advancing the plot. Is the soundtrack purely instrumental, or does it have a chorus and verses? Why would these choices have been made? How does the music change from scene to scene and from the beginning to the end of the film? What prominent themes do you notice repeated? What music can be associated with particular characters or emotions?

Think About It

- What elements do you feel you could write the most about?
- What examples from the film or television show could you use to support the claims you make?
- How can your notes and examples help flesh out each main point of the analysis?

Films can encourage changes to current systems or provide new insights into experiences a viewer may never have. They can allow a viewer to imagine a certain moment in time and that moment's impact on an individual or the world. A strong analysis of a film can enhance a reader's understanding of what a film is trying to say and shed light on concerns and issues in society; it can help people see how the world has changed (or needs to change), and it can enrich the viewing experience of the film watcher.

Now that you've taken plenty of notes about the film or television show you've chosen, you can organise and clarify your thoughts. Your experience with film and television analysis may leave you watching shows in a whole new way!

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Art Analysis
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 6

At times, you may be asked to analyse a piece of artwork to consider what the artwork says about a certain historical period or the artist responsible for its creation. This may be referred to as either art analysis or visual analysis. Visual analysis can be a fascinating and engaging endeavour, and it often allows a writer more freedom in exploring thoughts and ideas than other writing tasks. For instance, two writers may analyse the same photograph but look at it in entirely unique ways: one may focus on the form of the art, interpreting elements such as the lines and their significance to the photograph's subject, while the other analysis may attempt to place the setting of the piece within the context of an important period in the artist's biography and artistic development. The way you analyse art has much to do with your end goals in your overall assignment and your assignment prompt will give you a better idea of how you should approach this writing task.

Below, there are tips that focus on essays with the primary task of analysing a piece of art. However, they may also be helpful in assignments that require art analysis as a part of a larger task.

Focusing Your Art Analysis

Essays that analyse art as their primary task generally focus on one or more of the following topics: the element(s) or subject(s) of the visual or artistic work, the artist who created the work or the field in which the work is situated.

Artistic Elements

One important consideration in analysing a piece of art is usually the composition or elements of the work itself. For example, what kind of brush strokes does a painting use? What about its use of colour, lines and shapes? Unusual choice of material, veneer or application might also be relevant to your analysis. Similar questions apply to photographs, sculptures, etc. An essay analysing Alex Colville's painting *To Prince Edward Island*, for instance, might look at the painting's colours or how the painting's underlay visually depicts static fuzziness.

The Subject

Equally important as the composition is the subject of the artwork itself, meaning the person, place, thing or idea that the artwork is intended to depict. For example, an analysis of Colville's painting might consider the painting's true subject. Is it the woman in the foreground with binoculars or the apparent boating trip to the island? Or is the subject the relationship between the woman and the man in the background? An analysis of subject may be possible even for an abstract work in which the intended subject is not apparent or even determinable.

The Artist

Another consideration is the artwork's connection to the artist as a person. Such an analysis might look at the artist's biography and how the artwork is situated in the artist's life, or it might instead consider where and when the artist created the work and how that time and place relate to the work. For example, Colville's painting depicts a boat ride to the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. Did Colville visit the island in the 1960s when the painting was created? Did he long to visit? Or did something else inspire the work? How does the painting contrast with his work as a war artist? These questions illustrate possible ways an analysis might consider a work in relation to an artist's biography.

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The Field
A final consideration is the way the artwork relates to a broader field of art or to an artistic school of thought or theory. For example, does the work illustrate a particular artistic, political, aesthetic or cultural movement? Or does the work instead attempt to break free of or to deconstruct a particular movement, genre, form or convention? For example, how does Colville's painting relate to the artistic movement of Precisionism with which he was associated, to the European art that he studied or to the 'Group of Seven' artists who preceded him? Analysing the way an artist either illustrated or worked against a broader artistic movement or trend is a common method to relate a work of art to a broader field.

Think About It

- How does the artwork you're analysing use visual elements to convey meaning?
- Who or what is the subject of the work, and how does the work represent or obscure that subject?
- How does the artwork relate to a broader artistic field?
- How does the work connect to or distance itself from the artist's life, place and time?

Consider all aspects of an artwork as you determine how you would like to focus your essay and refer to your assignment prompt for any specific requirements or restrictions on your analysis.

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Annotated Bibliographies
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 7

During the research phase of writing a paper, you may be asked to develop an annotated bibliography. This is essentially a list of your sources (a bibliography) along with notes (annotations) explaining what each source says and, if requested by your lecturer, how it can contribute to your paper. You might also be asked to compose an annotated bibliography without putting together a separate research project as a way to gain greater understanding of a particular area in your field or coursework. Whatever the purpose, an annotated bibliography is organised just as you would organise the reference list for a paper, using the guidelines for a specific referencing style. The notes or annotations appear in paragraph form after each bibliographical entry.

Your lecturer should be the final source for guidelines on the format and content of the annotations, but most lecturers agree that the bibliography should follow the referencing style that is required for the final paper, whether that's Harvard, APA or some other style. After each bibliographic entry, you will summarise that source and possibly evaluate it, depending on the assignment task.

Research and the Annotated Bibliography

To begin, you will need to gather your resources, and that means finding documents that contain useful information and ideas related to your chosen topic. As you research, create a bibliographical entry in the referencing style (e.g., Harvard, APA) required by your assignment for each source you plan to use in your project. This bibliographical entry will appear before the notations in your annotated bibliography. If you are developing the annotated bibliography for a larger project, you will also use these bibliographical entries later in your works-cited page, references page or bibliography and to assist you in developing in-text citations. It's a good idea to also note important quotes and page numbers as you research so you can avoid unintentional plagiarism or searching out a page number again later for a reference.

Annotations

Next, write an annotation that summarises and/or critically evaluates each source. Refer to your assignment description and/or lecturer to determine if your annotated bibliography requires summary, evaluation or both. The examples below follow APA guidelines for annotated bibliographies, but please

refer to the requirements of the specific referencing style you've been asked to use. There are some brief guidelines noted later in this lesson.

Summaries
Summary annotations are relatively short, including the most essential ideas and facts from the source material without your critique of the work. Two or three sentences are appropriate for a summary annotation unless your lecturer requests more.

Pickering, K. (2019). Emotion, social action, and agency: A case study of an intercultural, technical communication intern. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *28*(3), 238–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2019.1571244

Supported by research involving the importance of emotions in the workplace, Pickering studied the emotions of a technical communication intern as she responded to requests for unexpected tasks and intercultural challenges. The study was based on not only which emotions were experienced but also how they helped develop the intern's persona in the workplace.

Since the origin of this annotation is clear from the reference information before it, this summary does not include an in-text citation after the author's name, in accordance with APA guidelines.

Evaluations
Evaluative annotations focus primarily on the credibility of the author(s) and on the perceived quality of their research. If your annotated bibliography is part of a larger research project, the annotation might also discuss what you expect the source to contribute to the paper you will write, depending on assignment requirements.

Finding Quality Sources

While you're researching, try to ascertain the credibility and relevance of each source. You might read with the following concerns in mind:

- *Credibility:* Essentially, what are the credentials of the author(s)? What kind of reputation does each author have in the field? How frequently is each author quoted by other authors? Which articles are peer reviewed or published in authoritative sources?
- *Relevance:* How helpful is each article or book for your research? Are there other sources that would take precedence, perhaps published more recently? Will the information from your source be meaningful to your audience?

Composing Your Annotated Bibliography

To annotate your source, think about questions that will let you examine the author and the text itself. Although the questions might seem to overlap, you will be looking at the material in a slightly different way. As you review each source, consider the three perspectives provided by the following groups of questions.

Questions to Ask About the Author
- What is the author's purpose?
- What arguments does the author use to support the premise?
- What evidence supports the arguments?
- What are the author's underlying assumptions or biases? What theories drive the author's reasoning?

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Questions to Ask about the Text

- What makes this text important to your project? What special contribution does this text offer?
- Where might there be discrepancies or outdated material in the author's arguments?
- Which terms have been clearly defined? Which terms should be explained in more detail?
- How sufficient is the evidence to support the arguments?
- What does the text present to refute opposing points of view?

Questions for Comparison

- How does the quality of the author's/authors' argument, method and/or theory shape up against that of other sources in your list? In what ways is it superior or inferior?
- What major points are missing in the source in comparison to others?
- Where do the authors/texts agree? Disagree?

Finally, you can put the three perspectives together in the concise annotation you can now begin to write, as in this APA-style example:

Pickering, K. (2019). Emotion, social action, and agency: A case study of an intercultural, technical communication intern. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *28*(3), 238–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2019.1571244

Based on research involving the importance of emotions in the workplace, Pickering's case study revealed useful strategies for negotiating agency in the workplace. The study demonstrated that intentional, positive emotions in response to requests for unexpected tasks and intercultural challenges can help workplace newcomers develop identify in their organisations. Additionally, the study clearly supported the value of reflection throughout this socialisation process, equipping the new technical communicator not only to overcome the stereotype of a mere transmitter of information but also to build an identity as a valuable contributor to the growth of the organisation.

Formatting an Annotated Bibliography

For every style covered below, list your sources alphabetically. Ultimately, refer to assignment instructions or your lecturer's preference when you format your annotated bibliography.

Harvard Guidelines

Harvard does not have official rules about how to format an annotated bibliography. However, your sources should be cited as they would be on a references page. Refer to your assignment guidelines and/or your lecturer's preferences to determine how to title the page and where to begin your annotations. Harvard style annotations are often only summaries, but make sure to check carefully. The assignment's wording will indicate if you need to summarise or evaluate your sources or both.

APA Guidelines

Whether your annotated bibliography is an independent assignment or part of a larger research paper, APA provides some overarching guidelines for its format. Order and format your sources as they would be on a reference page based on APA style. Begin each annotation one double-spaced line below its corresponding reference information. The entire annotation should be indented ½ inch from the left margin. In the instance that you need a second paragraph for an annotation, indent only the first line of that paragraph an additional ½ inch from the left margin. Depending on your assignment guidelines, provide a general or subject-specific heading, centred and in bold at the top of your annotated bibliography:

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Annotated Bibliography

Agency in the Workplace: Annotated Bibliography

MLA Guidelines
If you're using MLA style, begin your document with the heading Annotated Bibliography. Alternatively, you may begin with Annotated List of Works Cited, depending on your lecturer's preference. Include comments about each source that describe its main points or that evaluate its central and key supporting arguments. The annotated text may immediately follow (on the same line) the works-cited entry or begin on the next line, according to assignment instructions.

Think About It

- How should you expand your annotated bibliography so that it isn't like a standard bibliography?
- How much should your annotations summarise or evaluate?
- What formatting guidelines are the most appropriate for your document?

Writing annotations for your sources is an excellent way to become an expert on your chosen topic. You will be better prepared to compose a strong research paper on the topic, too!

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Literature Reviews
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 8

At some point during your coursework, you may be asked to write a literature review. The purpose of a literature review is to showcase your awareness of the most relevant, current or applicable literature about a specific topic. In this context, the term 'literature' refers to peer-reviewed or professional articles. For some disciplines and literature review assignments, each piece of literature should cover an original research study or unique theoretical perspective. A research study often entails using the scientific method to test a hypothesis. Theoretical literature usually involves describing new relevance or meaning of a known theory or presenting a new theory.

A literature review might be a free-standing assignment with the goal of developing broader expertise about a specific aspect of your field of study, or it might be part of a larger project that also includes your own original research or theoretical breakthrough, such as a dissertation. For example, if you are writing a dissertation that will describe your own research study, the literature review shows that your study fills a gap that has not yet been covered by other researchers in your field. The following sections describe some common approaches for organising and developing a literature review. Whether the review is a free-standing project or part of a larger project, it usually includes the following pieces and characteristics.

Literature Review Structure

As with most essays or larger sections of a large-scale project (such as dissertation chapters), a literature review usually includes an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. The body of the document usually includes a separate section or paragraph for each category of literature. For example, if a literature review were to focus on 'studies that explored the impact of prolonged screen-time on developmental milestones', the body of the review might include the following sections.

- Literature that explored the effects of screen time on language
- Literature that explored the effects of screen time on motor skills
- Literature that explored the effects of screen time on problem-solving
- Literature that explored the effects of screen time on socialisation

Within each section, there would be information about multiple studies that fit within the category. For example, the first major section of the sample topic would summarise several studies that discuss individual effects on language. Depending on the complexity of the topic and the scope of the literature review, larger sections could have a single paragraph for each study or paragraphs that cover sub-categories with a few sentences for each study. If each category includes multiple paragraphs, the best practice is generally to label each section with a heading. Refer to your assignment description, lecturer or institution's requirements to determine how to format headings and subheadings according to your required formatting style.

Introduction

Your readers need some background information about the topic of your literature review, and that information is usually provided in an introduction. Even when a literature review is a major section of a larger project, an introduction prepares readers for the context and significance of your literature review topic. The following types of background information can create context for a literature review. As with any writing task, use your best judgement about the academic discipline and your audience to determine what type of background information is most appropriate.

- An overview of your topic's larger relevance or immediacy
- Context about how long your topic has been a topic of study or debate
- Information about what discipline or group of professionals is most concerned about this topic
- An indication of how thoroughly the topic has been covered in the field. Are the efforts in your discipline to study this topic relatively new or as old as the discipline itself?

After presenting some background details, the introduction should also indicate the main idea or purpose of your literature review. In some cases, it can be helpful to summarise the general categories of the topic that have been covered. These categories will then become topics of sections or paragraphs in the body of your literature review. However, the main idea, sometimes referred to as a thesis statement, of a literature review should usually not present a new argument but rather summarise what types of studies have shaped the understanding of your topic within the community of people who study it. If the purpose of your literature review is to show that there is a gap in the literature that your original research will fill, then the main idea or thesis statement might also label that gap.

Body

The body of your review should describe separate categories of the literature, either in a single paragraph per category or a larger, multi-paragraph section per category. Within the structure and length that is most appropriate, you will summarise individual studies and describe their overall significance to your topic. The studies that you choose should usually be 'state-of-the-art', which means that they contributed a lasting impact or historical significance in the field. They should also be reputable and credible, and it's common to read more articles than you will include in the literature review and to carefully select the studies that are most appropriate. For each study that you include in the review, consider using the following strategies:

- Introduce the author(s), timeframe and topic of the study in a sentence or two.
- Describe the hypothesis and conclusion or overall findings. (If appropriate, you might also discuss the methodology, but this varies by discipline and purpose.)
- Explain how that study shaped the larger understanding of the topic. What was the impact of that study?
- If appropriate, you might also describe the study's flaws or limitations. Check with your assignment instructions or lecturer if you are unsure about whether this step is appropriate.

When describing individual pieces of literature, it's customary to paraphrase or summarise, but quotations are not usually necessary or appropriate. Each time you paraphrase or summarise, make sure that you follow the citation guidelines for the required style, such as Harvard or APA. You might even read a few professional literature reviews in your field to get a sense of how authors summarise and cite individual sources.

Conclusion

A literature review conclusion can have several goals. You might reflect on the implications of the sources you've reviewed, summarising how the literature has collectively impacted current practice, common knowledge or discipline-specific norms. It can be helpful to summarise the categories you have covered so that readers remember them. If your goal is to prove that your original research study will fill a gap, then the conclusion can be an appropriate place to explain what gap has been unfilled and why that gap is worth pursuing.

References

The sources that you have reviewed should also be listed in a references page at the end of the document. Each source should have a separate bibliographic entry in the style that you are using (Harvard, APA, Chicago/Turabian or MLA). The sources should appear in alphabetical order.

Think About It

- What are the most essential studies or articles about your topic?
- What aspect of your topic have been covered by the most influential researchers in your field?
- How does each resource contribute to the larger understanding of your topic?

Writing a literature review can be a rewarding way to become informed about the state-of-the-art research about a topic that inspires or fascinates you or that affects your future success in a chosen career. Enjoy the process!

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Reflections
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 9

One of the most effective practices of successful people is self-reflection. Successful students and professionals are usually able to reflect on why they know what they know, how they learn best and which of their own decisions and behaviours were effective or not effective. Even when tasks do not go as planned, successful people use reflection to learn from their mistakes and achieve better outcomes for the next project or endeavour. Because reflection positively impacts learning and future success, some lecturers may require you to write a reflection essay.

Reflective writing involves writing about your own personal growth or learning. In academic courses, reflection essays usually focus on how well you have mastered course outcomes. The purpose is usually to help you develop self-awareness of the experiences and behaviours that affected your learning. Although individual assignments vary, reflection essay assignments may include one or more of these types of content:

- A few different skills learned during a course or unit of study
- The impact of a particular event (such as a practicum) on your learning
- Your own strengths and weaknesses in a particular field of study or situation
- Your individual learning style or learning preferences

The assignment instructions usually indicate what aspects of your growth or learning should be the topic of your reflection. Reflective writing also usually requires you to write about yourself in the first person (*I, me, we, us)*. Reflective writing can be your only assignment task, or it can be a part of a larger assignment with multiple tasks. The following suggests a structure for assignments where reflective writing is the only objective of the assignment; however, the section on 'Body Paragraph Development' contains useful information for assignments where reflective writing is a portion of a larger assignment with multiple tasks.

Essay Structure

The ideal structure for a reflection essay depends on the goals of the assignment. If your task is to write about a few skills learned during an academic course or unit of study, then each body paragraph should focus on a separate skill learned or outcome achieved. If your task is to write about an event that impacted your learning, you might separate that event into chunks of time and reflect on how each part of the event shaped your progress towards a particular learning outcome. Below is an example of an essay structure that works well when the assigned task is to reflect on skills learned during a course in child development.

> ***Assignment:*** *Reflect on your progress during this course in learning about the three domains of child development for the age group you aspire to teach. Which texts or activities supported your understanding of these three domains, and how will you apply this understanding to your work in a future classroom for the target age group?*

I. Introduction
II. What I have learned about the physical domain of development
III. What I have learned about the psychosocial domain of development
IV. What I have learned about the cognitive domain of development
V. Conclusion

The skills or learning outcomes that you write about for this type of reflection may be predetermined by the assignment, or you may get to choose from many possible skills or professional strengths and weaknesses. Unless your task is to narrate an event in chronological order, each body paragraph should usually focus on a single learning achievement or a single strength or weakness.

Introduction Paragraph

The introduction to a reflection often begins with an overview of the learning experience or course you have just completed or will soon complete. Sometimes it's appropriate to describe your knowledge or feelings about the subject matter when the course began. For example, a student who is writing a reflection for the child development course might begin the introduction by describing his or her initial impressions of teaching and/or child development at the beginning of the course. It can also be helpful to describe the overall usefulness of the course or learning experience that the writer will reflect upon. By the end of the introduction, one might also summarise the main idea and general direction of the reflection. This summary of the essay's main idea is often referred to as a thesis statement. The following are examples of sentences that summarise the main idea and direction for two different reflection essay assignments:

- *The child development course has helped me to gain a deeper understanding of how I can support my future students' development in the three main domains.*
- *In order to become a successful nurse, I can build upon my strengths in communication and ethical practice and overcome my current challenges with evidence-based practice and teamwork.*

The first thesis statement shows that each body paragraph will discuss a separate domain of child development, and the second thesis statement indicates that each body paragraph will focus on a separate strength or weakness.

Body Paragraph Development

Each body paragraph in a reflection essay usually begins with a sentence that states the main skill, learning outcome, strength or weakness the paragraph will develop. This sentence is often referred to as a topic sentence because it focuses the paragraph on one specific part of the reflection. For example, the first body paragraph in a reflection about childhood development learning outcomes could begin with this topic sentence:

- *During the first few weeks of the semester, I became more knowledgeable about how to tailor my future classroom instruction to students' physical development.*

After this topic sentence, all of the supporting details (the sentences in the paragraph that come after the topic sentence) would pertain to what the writer learned about children's physical development through various assignments.

When developing the body paragraphs in a reflection essay, your goal might be to include some or all of these types of supporting details.

- Descriptions of the course activities and assignments that helped you to learn or demonstrate your understanding of the skill or insight
- Descriptions of your specific level of achievement with those assignments
- Information about how you will apply the skill or insight in the future

You might also explain why the skill or insight is worth mastering. Your reader may be curious about the methods you will use to apply the course concepts or experiences that you have reflected upon to future courses or professional environments.

Conclusion Paragraph

Reflection essays usually end with a conclusion paragraph that does the following things:

- Summarises the skills, insights, strengths and/or weaknesses you have described
- Elaborates on the overarching significance of the subject matter
- Indicates your future prospects or motivation regarding those learning objectives

The reader's final impression should usually be that you are committed to the learning objectives or concepts and that you understand how those concepts or objectives will affect you in the future.

Think About It

- What learning objectives or concepts are most appropriate or important to write about?
- How well did you understand or achieve those objectives during the course, unit of study or experience?
- Which assignments or texts helped you to develop an understanding of those objectives?

Reflective writing assignments will help you to develop the self-awareness and motivation that are part of almost any successful endeavour.

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Scientific or Technical Reports
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 10

Consider the following sample chemistry experiment. Your job is to titrate (that is, add in carefully measured amounts) one solution into another. At each step of the process, you observe and record the results in your lab notebook. After the experiment is finished, you will need to write a report that describes your measurements and what you observed. Finally, you will report any conclusions to be drawn from the experiment. Note that this process requires several steps:

- Be prepared for the experiment by doing any required reading and gathering of materials.
- Understand your goal for the experiment.
- Take excellent notes during the experiment.
- Write about your observations in an acceptable format.

Once you get your observations written down, you will have composed a scientific report. The purpose of such a report is to accurately convey the details and results of an experiment to your readers, who

may need to repeat the experiment in order to verify your results. The clarity of your report will have a direct impact on your reader's ability to replicate your results.

Preparation

Knowing what you're going to do in the experiment is where everything begins. After all, how can you know what to do and how to write about it if you haven't prepared before beginning the experiment? To get ready, follow these guidelines:

- Read your lab assignment in advance to know what you will be doing.
- If you're not sure what you will be doing or you don't understand the material, the equipment or the experiment, find the answers to your questions before going to the lab.
- In your notebook, record all the theories, equations and principles that you should know in order to understand the experiment. You can use these later to explain what happened.
- Record what you think will happen in the experiment before going to the lab and write why you're making these predictions. Such predictions are called *hypotheses*.

Observations Made Easy

If you are prepared for the experiment, you have done half the work already. Some students go to the lab unsure of what they are going to do. It's easy to misunderstand the principles behind an experiment or dive in without first thinking about potential outcomes or results. The risk here is that you could end up cramming way too many details into your notebook—details you won't understand when looking at your notes several days later.

By contrast, if you go into the lab prepared, your notebook will be ready to house the information you will record in it and you will have a significantly easier time knowing what details are most important to your report. Now, all you have to do is perform the experiment and write down what actually happens.

Writing About Your Observations

Most scientific and lab reports use a standard format to present information; however, there are some variations. Before recording information, make sure you check with your lecturer so you can use the format he or she prefers.

The Introduction (Statement of the Problem)

Your report should have an introduction that states the problem and the purpose of the experiment. The introduction should highlight the following:

- Any relevant background information
- Experiments or research that set the context for the experiment
- The 'question', or hypothesis, for the experiment

Don't skimp on this section. The more pertinent information that you write, the more you demonstrate that you know what the experiment is about. If needed, your introduction may be more than one paragraph long.

Methods and Materials (Procedure)

In this section, describe the experimental procedure itself. Readers need to know

- The research design
- Methods and materials, such as the subjects and how they were selected
- The equipment
- Whether you did laboratory or field research
- The steps taken in the experiment

In a chemistry lab, for example, you would include the chemicals, or reagents, used in the experiment and the equipment, or tools, that you used. Be precise as you discuss what you used and what you did to perform the procedure. For example, don't tell the reader that you mixed 10 grams of sodium

chloride into the mixture if you actually mixed 10.5 grams of sodium chloride. Stick to the precision that your equipment is capable of recording—no more, no less. Similar precision is useful when developing reports in the social sciences. If you worked with 11 children, indicate that you worked with 11, not 'approximately 10'.

Usually, the Methods and Materials section is written in the past tense because you've already performed the experiment. Its purpose is to relate the experimental process step-by-step so that the reader can duplicate your experiment using the same methods and equipment.

The Results (Data Presentation)
This section reports on the findings of the experiment, or the data. Don't include explanations in this section. Visual aids, such as graphs, charts, tables and diagrams, make the data presentation stronger, or, depending on your lecturer's instructions. Another option is a simple narrative account of what happened. This section also may include a sample calculation (if any data reduction is involved) for one representative set from the data.

The Discussion (Conclusions)
In this final section, you will summarise the findings of your experiment and offer some tentative conclusions. You've already told *what* happened; now tell *why* it happened. You will discuss whether your original hypothesis was or was not confirmed by the experiment and speculate (make an educated guess) as to why. In addition, you will share with the reader the meaning, or implications, of the experiment and describe any follow-up experiments that might confirm or extend the results. The Discussion section is essential because it shows that you understand the experiment beyond simply being able to complete it. This is where the preparations before the experiment pay off. Lecturers and professional colleagues reward people who can use writing to explain, analyse and interpret results.

Think About It

- What steps do you need to take to prepare for your experiment?
- What should be recorded in your notebook before doing the experiment?
- Which elements, if any, are missing from your Methods and Materials section?
- Which key findings should be included in your Discussion?

Preparing thoroughly, making careful observations and recording all applicable information will make writing your report easier. Your readers will appreciate your hard work all the more as a result!

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Proposals
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 11

When your lecturer or your boss asks for a proposal, what does that mean? Unlike traditional essays, proposals are purely persuasive in nature and put the most important information first. Like résumés, these documents allow readers to make a quick decision about who to accept to provide goods or services. A business proposal argues for what work is to be done and who is to do it, offering a method to discover information, evaluate something new, solve a problem or implement a change. An academic proposal argues for the approval to write about a specific topic in an upcoming essay or report.

Determining a Focus

As you compose a proposal, you can answer these questions both to create and double-check its content:

- ***What problem are you going to solve, or what opportunity do you hope to present?***
  This is where you explain the problem—how prevalent or important it is or that it exists at all.

Show that you understand the organisation’s (your audience’s) needs, and then show the problem through the audience’s eyes.
- ***Why does this problem need to be solved now, or why does the opportunity need to be explored immediately?*** Show the audience what money, time, health and social concerns impact the immediacy of the issue. You should also explain the consequences of waiting.
- ***How are you going to solve the problem?*** Show that a feasible solution is possible within the allotted time. Specify what you will do, how you will gather data and that your solution is the best option.
- ***Who will be involved?*** This is the chance for you to indicate how you or your company will be able to handle the project. Consider your personnel and their qualifications as well as any limitations in your organisation. You should also discuss the direct and indirect benefits that you and your organisation can provide.
- ***What is the timeline, or when will the work be completed?*** Outline a specific schedule showing what steps will be completed at what time.
- ***What are the approximate costs?*** Note all conceivable costs, including salaries, materials, overhead, travel and worker benefits.
- ***What product will you provide?*** Note the specific, tangible product you will provide and the benefits of choosing that product.

In addition to answering the questions above, be sure to
- Allow plenty of time for editing and revision
- Format the proposal so that the appearance leaves a good impression
- Allow for time to distribute the proposal
- Finish the proposal early so you can take care of any last-minute concerns that arise

You must carefully consider to whom you direct the proposal; the language should be clear and concise, avoiding overuse of technical terms or jargon. Use the language your readers understand and expect to see. Because you’re persuading, anticipate those readers’ questions and answer them with specific data and other information. Emphasize the benefits of your solution from every angle.

Types of Proposals
While each proposal has a specific purpose, there are different types with varying structures to achieve different ends for the academic and the business worlds.

Research Proposals
These are often used as individual or group assignments for an academic class. You want your lecturer to know that your problem is meaningful, you understand it, your method will give you the information you need, you have the knowledge and resources to collect and analyse the data and you can produce the report by the deadline. Follow this structure for research proposals:

- **Summary and Purpose**: Summarise the topic and purpose of the report in a sentence or two.
- **Problem**: State the problem and why it needs to be solved. Provide relevant background.
- **Feasibility**: Discuss which solution is feasible in the time allotted and how you know it’ll work.
- **Audience**: Include who will implement the recommendation and who would be affected by it. Note which secondary audiences may evaluate your report as well as the audience’s major concern or priority. Carefully state which issues you might address. Take note as to how much the audience knows and why there is interest in this topic.
- **Topics to Investigate**: Share the questions and sub-questions you will answer, outline aspects of the problem and explain the rationale for addressing some aspects over others.
- **Methods/Procedure**: Note any techniques or procedures you will utilise. Explain how you will collect the data, the specific materials you will use and the resources you will research. You may also need to list complete reference citations for any potential sources, depending on the proposal or assignment guidelines.
- **Qualifications/Facilities/Resources**: State who has the knowledge and skills needed to conduct this study. Note what information is available to you about the problem or organisation. Also acknowledge where you will turn for help if you run into problems.

- **Work Schedule**: Outline the time each activity will take as well as the completion date for each one. This also includes a product description approach, delivery schedule and other appropriate information. Some potential activities include the following.
    - Gathering information
    - Analysing information
    - Organising information
    - Drafting
    - Revising
    - Preparing visuals (as applicable)
    - Editing
    - Proofreading
- **Call to Action**: Ask for suggestions for improvement as well as for approval so that you can begin work on the study.

Proposals for Action
These proposals offer ways to solve problems or recommend new programs. They often require research outside the company, such as from trade and professional journals, other online resources and/or interviews with employees or customers. The benefits you discuss need to address each level of the audience, especially to ensure contributions. The structure of these proposals includes the following parts:

- **Executive Summary**: Reveal what you propose doing, why you propose doing it and why the action is important.
- **Statement of Work**: Describe what you will do or what you will provide the customer. Include a product description, approach, delivery schedule and other appropriate information.
- **Management Plan**: Explain how you will organise and supervise any work. Note the phases and how you plan to use the resources, including how you will address any quality issues or risks.
- **Qualifications**: Show your capability to do what you propose or to deliver the product. You may note your own or your organisation's prior experience, past performance and references.
- **Staffing Plan**: Outline who will complete particular tasks. Service contracts and résumés may be necessary for those outside the organisation.
- **Contracts and Pricing**: Provide any business or contractual terms to close the business deal.

Sales Proposals
These proposals offer goods or services. The audience is a buyer, so understanding the audience's priorities is essential. For everything you offer, illustrate the benefits and explain why they're beneficial. The structure for these proposals is a little different:

- Catch the reader's attention; summarise the major benefits you offer.
- Address each benefit in the order presented in the summary.
- Address objections and concerns, especially regarding costs.
- Note any other benefits.
- Ask for approval and explain the rationale for prompt action.

Business Proposal
These proposals are driven by the customer's expectations and instructions. You will include material to show that you and your company offer the best solution. The sections for business proposals include

- **Executive Summary**: Note what you plan to do, why you need to do it and why it's important to the company or customers.
- **Business Summary**: Include the industry overview and any legal issues to consider.
- **Marketing Summary**: Discuss the target market, your promotional strategies, the situation's analysis, competition to consider and services to provide.
- **Financial Plan**: Cover all applicable expenses, such as indirect costs, like overhead, as well as those that may be gained or accrued from other sources.

Proposals for Funding
These proposals seek money for projects from foundations, corporations, and government agencies and are submitted by non-profit organisations to build relationships to ensure grants. Structure for these proposals varies, so the bottom line is that you should look carefully at the guidelines for the particular proposal and follow those to the letter. The guidelines are often used to help weed out applications. You don't want your proposal to be rejected because of too many pages, spacing or even a missing heading!

Think About It

- What kind of proposal do you need to use for your purpose?
- How will you modify the structure and headings to fit the purpose of your proposal?
- What kinds of questions will you ask?

A proposal, in general, proposes for work to be done and by whom. It can be for academic or business purposes. Some types of proposals include research, proposals for action, sales, business and funding, each with specifics about structure and headings. Using questions to determine the proposal's focus and keeping your audience in mind as you decide what to include in each section will ensure a strong proposal. Additionally, making sure that you are aligning your proposal with any requirements set out by your lecturer and/or university will ensure you are developing precisely what you need for your purposes.

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Abstracts
Chapter 1, Section 2: Lesson 12

Some writing assignments may require an abstract. Although an abstract is not always required for an academic assignment written in APA or Harvard, if an abstract is required, understanding the purpose of an abstract will help ensure the form and content are correct. Your abstract will need to convey your paper's main points as succinctly as possible. Examining what an abstract is *not* will help explain what an abstract is:

- *An abstract is not an introduction; it's more like a summary.* Although it gives an overview of the subject and supporting topics, an abstract's primary role is to summarise the information, including key research, that can be found in the paper. From the abstract, readers should understand your research and your findings so they can then decide whether they would benefit from reading the paper itself.
- *An abstract is not written as a proposal.* A proposal is more like a forecast of what your paper will be about. In contrast, an abstract summarises the paper that you've already written.

Your abstract should be written in the same formatting style used in your paper. Feel free to use the APA guidelines below as a checklist, but always consult your lecturer for specific details.

Composing Your Abstract
Content
An abstract must accurately reflect the purpose and content of its paper, so only include information that actually appears in the paper. Briefly explain the central issue or problem so readers understand your motivation and purpose for writing. Then, summarise the paper's important points, such as the objective, methodology, results and conclusions, if applicable. Each abstract varies in the weight it gives to these points, so you will need to decide what to emphasize. If there are one or two sources central to your argument, mention these in your abstract as well. Remember, however, to always consult your lecturer or read through the university's dissertation or thesis guidelines for instructions specific to your course of study.

Abstract

> Many online news outlets now enable user comments, opening the door to a bevy of opinions, both educated and ignorant. These opinions may affect the media's agenda when determining stories' content. Some user-generated content includes quantifiable statements and statistical information, particularly when the news story regards policy or world affairs. However, user-generated content is often erroneous, manipulating or misstating facts or providing unverified statistics. This study reviewed thousands of verifiable statements in comments generated by users of three news sites and found that nearly 75% of the statements were factually incorrect. The research calls into question the value of online comment sections and casts a pall over the recent practice by news producers of incorporating user comments into news stories and broadcasts.

Voice
Use active voice and past tense: *The paper found that . . .* The present tense may be used to describe implications and conclusions.

Point of View
General guidelines suggest using third person point of view: *Research showed that . . .* However, this kind of objectivity can be confusing in an abstract, so write carefully and clearly to ensure readers know what you researched at each stage of your project. If you worked in a group and are reporting results of a study the group conducted, you may prefer to use first person: *We analysed test results from . . .* If needed, check with your lecturer to determine the appropriate point of view.

Length
APA guidelines suggest writing the abstract in just one paragraph, not exceeding 250 words. Because your space and word count are limited, look for ways to save space. Spell expressions out initially and then abbreviate: *Society for the Protection of Manuscripts (SPM)* becomes simply *SPM* on the second mention. Exceptions are words for which the abbreviated forms have become commonplace, like *IQ* and *REM*.

Formatting Your Abstract

Placement
The abstract should come on its own page before the paper. In APA style, the abstract appears on page 2, after the title page.

Format
Set your margins at 1 inch on all sides. At the top of the page, place the page number flush right. In addition, write the heading **Abstract** in bold, centring it on the first line at the top of the page. The text of the abstract should begin one double-spaced line below the heading and should not be indented. If the abstract is part of a longer work, the abstract should be double-spaced and in the same font as the rest of the paper.

Keywords

If your lecturer requests a list of keywords, place them one double-spaced line below the abstract. Begin with the label *Keywords:* and indent it one tab or ½ inch from the left margin. Following the colon, include three to five keywords describing the most significant concepts in your paper. Keywords should be in plain font and lowercase, but any keyword that's a proper noun should be capitalised. If keywords run onto a second line, do not indent; this line should be flush with the left margin. Finally, do not end the list of keywords with a full stop or any other punctuation.

> *Keywords:* online news, media agenda, user-generated content, online comments

Abstracts in Harvard or MLA

If you aren't using APA style, the following additional guidelines should be helpful.

Harvard Style
Harvard style does not outline any specific guidelines for developing an abstract, but it is common for universities that use Harvard style to have personalised requirements for formatting papers. Please

Pearson

refer to your lecturer and/or university's style guide for information on formatting your abstract in your Harvard style paper.

MLA
MLA doesn't outline many specific standards for writing abstracts, so simply share a brief summary of your paper if an abstract is required. Usually, papers written in MLA style don't include front matter, like an abstract or title page; instead, the essay begins on the first page after the appropriate heading and title. If an abstract is required and you're using MLA, refer to your lecturer's preferences and format the abstract with the same MLA standards used in the rest of the paper.

What Abstracts Don't Need
To write a strong abstract, avoid the following:

- Evaluating authors or theories you researched; instead, report on them
- Using nouns when there's a strong, clear verb available (say *estimate* not *the estimation of*)
- Repeating information (i.e., the paper's title)—space is at a premium

Think About It

- What major findings or theories should be included in your abstract?
- Which keywords will best describe your abstract's content?
- Where can you reduce wordiness or repetition to save space?

Fresh wording will make the abstract engaging so that readers want to read your paper. Use your abstract to present the same information you include in your paper, but phrase that information a bit differently to make your research as compelling for your readers as it was for you!

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Chapter 1, Section 3: Business Writing Tasks

Business Reports
Chapter 1, Section 3: Lesson 1

The purpose of any business report is to inform, offer a solution, report progress or make a detailed recommendation. Your report may be about a company or organisation's products, services, customers, markets, personnel or policies. Whatever the case, your report's content should clearly present its information to a specific audience, such as colleagues or clients. Reports are often divided into sections, and they may use charts, graphs and/or attached documents to convey information.

Understanding Audience and Purpose
Whether you have been asked to write a report by your employer or for a course, analysing the audience and purpose of the report before writing will make it more successful.

Audience
Shape the information in your report to fit the intended audience's characteristics and interests. A few basic questions can get you started:

- Who is the primary, most immediate audience?
- Who is the secondary audience, or those who might see the report later?
- What characteristics or interests does the audience have in relation to the report's topic?
- What background knowledge about the topic does the audience already have?
- What is the audience's attitude toward the topic: favourable or not?

Purpose
State the report's purpose clearly in the introduction. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the report's primary purpose, or the main reason the audience needs it?
- What is the report's secondary purpose, or an alternate reason it's needed?
- What will audience members do with or in reaction to this report?
- Why is the report important at this point in time?

If possible, conduct interviews with audience members to help answer some of these questions. The audience can reveal more about the purpose. For instance, if you want to recommend a product that your audience hasn't used before, they will need to know more about it before making a decision based on your recommendation.

Types of Reports

Knowing a bit about the type of report you need will make the writing easier. A few common short reports include the following:

- **Recommendations:** You can use these to examine a current problem, such as in the workplace environment, and recommend a solution. In this kind of report, you should share both research and any study you've done to accurately interpret data. If your conclusions are informed and clear, your recommendation will be convincing.
- **Progress Reports:** To evaluate the progress of a project, activities or specific issues, use a progress report. You can also present updates on a project in this type of report, whether you present them on a regular basis or at the start or completion of a project.
- **Meeting Minutes:** You can record discussion and decisions from a meeting in short reports commonly called minutes. These reports are used to share the information with team members and other applicable parties via email or in print at the start of a subsequent meeting.

Types of longer reports you may need to write include the following:

- **Causal Reports:** If you need to explain why something happened, use a causal report. These reports are useful if you need to predict future possibilities, such as results of a decision or repercussions of a policy change.
- **Comparative Reports:** You can compare or rate specific items in a comparative report. To do so, examine specific criteria about these items and use what you find out as points of discussion. These points will help you develop strong comparisons.
- **Feasibility Reports:** To outline whether a plan or new idea is practical, use a feasibility report. Any research you do to plan or configure your idea should be shared in the report to give an accurate assessment of the situation.

Keep in mind that a report may have more than one purpose, so a multi-faceted approach may be appropriate. If no single type suits your needs, try combining two or three based on the needs of your audience and purpose.

Sections in Reports

Depending on your report's length and purpose, include some or all of the following sections:

- **Introduction:** In this section, state necessary background information, such as the topic's importance or origin. You may also use a problem statement or goal to report on an issue that needs addressing. The introduction should share the report's purpose, or what you're proposing and/or hope to implement. If applicable, describe any research methods you used. Close the introduction by describing the expected outcome as briefly as possible.
- **Body:** Any findings and explanations based on your research and study should come in the body of the report. This information may include, for instance, details, data and evidence you came across that help support your plan or recommendation. If necessary, use headings in the body to help readers quickly and efficiently navigate to appropriate sections.

- **Conclusion:** Conclude by summarising the major goals briefly, but avoid including new data or ideas. Instead, provide an overview of the report as well as noting the implications of your findings. Depending on the complexity of information in the body, you may also use the conclusion to interpret the report, perhaps through a call to action or a specific recommendation. If applicable, use the conclusion to answer the central question you posed in the introduction.

Other items may be needed in your report, depending on the assignment or situation. These could include a table of contents, title page, abstract/executive summary or transmittal letter, as well as a glossary, appendix or list of references.

Visual Components of Reports

A well-designed report keeps the audience interested. If a report contains only large blocks of text, readers will get bogged down and quickly scan certain sections, overlooking important information. To keep readers engaged, rely on the following visual cues:

- **Header:** Some companies or organisations have a header with a name and/or logo on it to signify who they are or what they represent. If so, consider including it at the beginning of the report.
- **Headings:** When reports are long and discuss a variety of topics, headings visually divide major sections. They should state what each section contains, allowing readers to quickly look through the report before getting into the details.
- **Lists:** Rather than writing out a lot of items in a single sentence, try stacking similar items into lists to make them visually accessible. Use lists only when you must since a report composed entirely of lists will be lacklustre. There are two basic types of lists:
    - Numbered lists sequence information in order of importance
    - Bulleted lists show key concepts and help the audience review information quickly
- **Visuals:** Clarify your points with visuals. Choose wisely, using visuals as support rather than as a substitute for explaining findings. Appropriate visuals might include charts, graphs, figures and tables.
- **Page numbers:** To help the audience navigate your report, incorporate page numbers according to your assignment or organisation's style and standards.

Some organisations or companies have style guides that outline specific formatting and visual standards. A style guide may detail what types of fonts can be used, for instance, or what headings and sub-headings should look like. Be sure to ask if a style guide is available before designing the visual components of your report.

Usability of Your Report

A few additional tips can help to make the report more user-friendly for your audience:

- **Clarity:** Clear and direct language keeps the audience attentive. Avoid long explanations and cumbersome, confusing wording by editing or proofreading the final draft before sharing it.
- **Details:** Including only the most important details from your research makes the report efficient. When you define complex terms your audience may not know, take care to incorporate only as much detail or background information as needed to keep the audience engaged and prevent confusion.
- **Focus:** The original goal and purpose drive the report. To begin, identify the report's main questions and share a goal statement explaining the purpose. If you need to show progress, explain achievements clearly and specifically, using documented results or statistics as support.
- **Accuracy:** Accurate information boosts the report's credibility. To keep the audience informed and credibility high, conduct research from reputable sources and present your findings without bias.
- **Energy:** Active language makes the report compelling and motivating. If a report includes a call to action, for instance, use active verbs to deliver your message with meaning.
  Some active verbs to choose from include the following:

Recommend	Assess	Advocate	Develop
Examine	Evaluate	Analyse	Solve
Research	Invent	Invest	Adapt
Determine	Resolve	Guide	Implement

Think About It

- What do you know about your audience and purpose that will help you prepare to write?
- What research do you need to accurately share to heighten the report's credibility?
- Where will important details, useful visuals and clear language make the report convincing and engaging?

A report can promote important change in a company or organisation, so sharing its application, recommendations or results should be rewarding. Good luck!

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Résumés
Chapter 1, Section 3: Lesson 2

A résumé is a potential employer's snapshot into who you are and what you bring to a position. It's your chance to showcase your accomplishments in an organised and visually appealing way. Like all writing, a résumé should be written to its target audience. An effective résumé should be tailored to each different position, even if you are applying for multiple positions within the same company.

Résumé Components

Résumés tend to rely on the following guidelines, which are demonstrated in the sample résumé below.

Contact Information

Begin the résumé with your name at the top in a large, bold font. Under your name, place your mailing address, your phone number and your professional email address. In this section, you can also include a link to your LinkedIn account or professional website if you have one.

Summary or Career Objective

After your contact information, the résumé should include a professional summary or an objective. A summary is 2-3 sentences or bullet points that describe your work experience in an engaging way. You can think of these as the focus or purpose statement for your résumé. Emphasize specific key skills and use strong verbs in this section. The summary is also a section where you can revise the wording for specific jobs by including keywords from the job description that match your experience.

A career objective provides the main type of job or career you are pursuing in addition to an overview of your best qualities or qualifications. The purpose of this section is to show that you are both motivated and qualified to work in the position that you are seeking.

This section should be slightly modified each time you apply for a new position. Before writing this section, research the organisation to learn more about its mission, culture and product or service so you can tailor your résumé to the types of employees the organisation wants to hire.

Education

List your degrees or certifications by starting with your most recently acquired degree. If you are still working on a degree, place it first with an anticipated graduation date. If you have received any academic honours, consider noting these after the degree information for the corresponding school.

Professional Experience
This section can have many possible titles, such as 'Employment', 'Work Experience' or 'Professional Experience'. You can include a sub-section for each position you have held and organise the positions in reverse chronological order. For example, a job you still have now or recently left would go first. Each sub-section usually includes the following:

- A bold sub-heading that includes the dates of employment, the job title and the employer
- A list of your responsibilities at that job
- A list of your achievements while working there

When describing responsibilities and achievements, choose active verbs and explain aspects of the job that may be specific to the place of employment. It can also be effective to tailor these descriptions to the job you are seeking since your goal is to prove that each previous or current position would prepare you in some way for the job you hope to get.

Specialised Sections
Depending on your activities and interests, you might decide to include other special sections in your résumé to highlight skills and contributions beyond your education and specific work experience:

- *Awards:* If you've earned awards from your academic department, your institution or outside philanthropic organisations, list them along with the date(s) received.
- *Certifications:* You may have specialised certifications related to your field. If so, place them in their own section, identifying each certificate name and the completion date. If you are currently working on a certification, list its date with *anticipated completion.*
- *Volunteer experience:* Volunteer experience may be useful to include on your résumé to show a potential employer your interests outside the workplace as well as your willingness to go above and beyond required duties. Depending on how much space you have on your résumé, identify the name of the volunteer position, the organisation, the date(s) of service and your key responsibilities.

Referees
Here you can list names and contact information for present or past supervisors or co-workers who have the qualifications and knowledge to recommend you for a position. Be sure to ask permission from your referees before including their contact information on a résumé.

Strategies for Effective Résumés
As you review your résumé for final editing, remember these characteristics of strong résumé writing:

- Be mindful of the length of your résumé. Some employers prefer a one-page résumé, but a longer résumé can also be acceptable. Keep all information succinct and relevant. Employers are busy and often have hundreds of résumé to review for a single position. Therefore, avoid overcrowding your résumé with too many details. Save them for the cover letter or interview, and focus on including the most applicable and pertinent information on the résumé. The only exception to this rule might be if you are at a later stage in your career and need to showcase multiple application positions or if you are completing a Curriculum Vitae (common when applying for academic positions).
- Be flexible by revising the résumé regularly. A fresh résumé will give you a new perspective on your experience and skills, which will translate well during your contact with the company.
- Use keywords from the job description. Most companies have a computer program that scans résumés for keywords. Résumés without those keywords will be discarded before they are ever seen by a manager.
- Keep your language and tone professional. Avoid slang and text lingo, and use a professional email address.

Pearson

Sample Résumé

Natalie Simon

555 Cherry Lane, Preston, VIC 3000
Mob: 0402 400 300 PH: 8479 6328
natalie.simon@email.com

Career objective

I am a software engineer with over 5 years of experience and strong knowledge of industry trends who is seeking a rewarding and challenging position in the field of educational technology. I offer knowledge and experience with all phases of the software development cycle and automation practices as well as academic support services and educational theory.

Education

2012 Bachelor of Software Engineering, RMIT University

Employment

2015–2017 Mooncorp Software Engineer

Responsibilities:

- Provided input to assist or developed business systems solutions, estimates and specifications
- Created and maintained quality, high-level technical designs
- Analysed and repaired support software issues
- Collaborated with tech leads to drive the company's strategic technical direction

Achievements:

- Earned highest customer satisfaction rating for efficient product development
- Participated in sales presentations generating over $200K in revenue

2012-2015 Torgus Games Junior Software Engineer

Responsibilities:

- Developed educational and recreational games and applications for both console and mobile platforms
- Collaborated with artists to create innovative and functional game designs
- Wrote cross-platform code to power native applications on different mobile devices

Achievements:

- Developed one of *PC World's* '12 Best Free Entertainment Services and Apps of 2012'
- Participated in an educational software project that earned Torgus an Australian Innovation Award

2011-2012 Tutor Doctor Math Tutor

Responsibilities:

- Tutored children ages 11-13 in algebraic equations, basic math skills and academic organisation
- Communicated weekly progress with parents, tutoring centre directors and schools

Skills

- Agile SDLC
- .Net C#, MVC
- nHiberate/Entity Framework
- API Development, MS Build, Alfred/Jenkins/Go Server
- JSON/XML/HTML/JavaScript/CSS

- WebDriver/Selenium/Automated Testing

Referees

Tanya Lion, CTO, Mooncorp
Ph: 9383 4454
E: tanya.lion@mooncorp.com

James Reed, Senior Manager, Torgus
Ph: 9650 7990
E: Reed.ja@torgus.com.au

Think About It

- How applicable is each component to the position you're applying for?
- Which of your skills directly link to this potential job?
- What keywords in an objective or summary will show that you are the best candidate?

In the job application process, your résumé is your chance to showcase the marketable skills that will make you the perfect fit for the job you are seeking. After you have completed your résumé, use these questions to help keep it fresh.

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Cover and Thank You Letters
Chapter 1, Section 3: Lesson 3

You saw the ad for your dream job, and you polished your résumé, but there's another essential element in a solid application: the cover letter. The cover letter is sent with your résumé to the employer with your initial application. This is followed by a thank you letter after the interview.

The Cover Letter

The cover letter is sent to the employer with your initial application and résumé and tailored to the employer and specific position. It highlights unique skills from your résumé by providing specific details about your accomplishments at former positions and throughout your education. The cover letter has a dual purpose: to demonstrate your writing ability and to show potential employers your ability to think critically about and link your experiences to a given position.

Formatting

Each cover letter should begin with your contact details. Your address should be listed in the first block of the letter, followed by the date and a blank line space.

In the next block, list the hiring manager's name, his or her title and the company's name and address. Then, after a blank line space, begin with the greeting, as demonstrated in this example.

929 Highland Drive
Preston, VIC 3000
Mobile: 0402 400 300
Email: andrew.scott@email.com

3 April 2017

Johnathan Cooke

Pearson

Manager of Operations
Escapades Resorts
457 Essex St
Fremantle WA 6160

Dear Mr Cooke:

A cover letter should be addressed to the individual in charge of hiring, using only his or her last name. If you don't know this person's name, use his or her job title, such as Dear Managing Editor or Dear Human Resources Director.

Your cover letter should be only one page consisting of three or four paragraphs. To organise it, after the heading, address and greeting, include an introduction, 1-2 body paragraphs and a conclusion.

Introduction
This first paragraph should state the position and indicate why you are interested. Mention where you saw the job posting, including the names of any contacts you have at the company or organisation, especially if someone referred you to the job. Think about answering these core questions in your introduction:

- Why are you interested in the position?
- Who did you talk to?
- What skills and experiences do you bring that make you a good fit for the position?

Think of your answer to the last question as your main idea. For help writing the main idea, review the job description's keywords and note the elements of the position that are mentioned most often. Are there repeated keywords or phrases? Your main idea sentence should include those keywords and phrases, indicating how the elements they're looking for match your skills and experiences.

Body
The body paragraph(s) in the cover letter should develop the reasons why you are qualified for the job. For example, some job seekers choose to include a body paragraph about professional skills and experiences and a body paragraph about personal skills that are relevant to the job.

Within each body paragraph, there should be examples of specific projects, milestones or accomplishments from your other jobs or more elaborate information about the type of work you did at a specific job or internship. Avoid simply repeating information from your résumé; build on identified educational and work experiences by pinpointing specifics and elaborating on them to show the reader what you've accomplished:

- *Draft:* After obtaining my degree, I worked at Global University for one year as a financial aid counsellor.
- *Revision:* At Global University, I built my customer service skills while working with students and was recognized for *Outstanding Service to Students* three semesters in a row.

Show what you have gained, learnt or accomplished from the education and job experiences included on your résumé instead of simply repeating them.

To help generate a list of possible examples to include in your body paragraphs, sit down with your résumé and write some specific accomplishments or projects from each work-related position or educational stage. You don't need to discuss each point in detail while brainstorming; instead, once you have jotted down a number of ideas, you can then narrow the list and use only the evidence that clearly proves each reason why you are qualified.

When choosing examples to include in your body paragraphs, also review the advertisement or job description to find hints about what the employer is looking for. Similarly, look at the company's website and read about its mission or other information about the company's values and objectives. Ask yourself these questions:

- What important initiatives is the company leading in the community or within the organisation?
- What keywords are repeated across the company's website, social media platforms or other company literature?
- Who are the current employees, and what are their backgrounds?

Conclusion
Including the following elements in the conclusion will show you are seriously pursuing the position and committed to working for the company:

- End the cover letter by looking to the future and expressing your desired outcome, such as an interview or a request to speak with a manager about other opportunities.
- Thank the employer for considering your request or application.
- Specify what other documents you have included in the application, such as a résumé.
- Choose a respectful closing, such as *Sincerely* or *Best regards*.

Sample Cover Letter

929 Highland Drive
Preston, VIC 3000
Mobile: 0402 400 300
Email: andrew.scott@email.com

3 April 2017

Johnathan Cooke
Manager of Operations
Escapades Resort
457 Essex St
Fremantle WA 6160

Dear Mr Cooke:

I was pleased to see your recent job post for a food and beverage manager at Escapade Resort. Based on the information in the ad and my research on the hotel, I believe my experience and qualifications are an ideal fit for the job. My résumé, which highlights my career, is enclosed for your consideration.

My professional career has been built through working on cruise ships in New York Harbor. The cruises specialise in showing guests magnificent views of the city while providing them with high-end dining and entertainment. These opportunities have provided me with invaluable experience staffing and working with people, managing and organising events and planning and overseeing provisions for each cruise.

In managing cruises, I have learnt the value of preparation. Once a ship leaves the dock, there are no resources for more food, beverages or service materials. Your guests and those serviced by Circle the Island Cruises should, and do, expect and demand flawless service and meticulous attention. My experience in these areas makes me a strong candidate for food and beverage manager. I will bring the requisite knowledge and planning skills to ensure that every bar, lounge, restaurant, special event and guest room is ready for any occurrence.

As much as I love cruises, I am ready to continue my career in a more traditional food and beverage setting. I look forward to speaking with you at any time to discuss specific requirements of the position as well as my qualifications. My résumé and referees are enclosed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Scott

The Thank You Letter
While effective résumés and cover letters will get your foot in the door, a thank you note will keep the door open! Many people neglect to send these, but sending a thank you letter to all those you met with during your interview will keep your application fresh in the mind of a potential employer. It will also set you apart from those who don't send a thank you note.

Usually by email, you should write a follow-up letter to a prospective employer within twenty-four hours of your interview. A thank you letter tends to follow a pattern. In standard business format, include the following parts:

- Express your appreciation for the interview. Include the people who interviewed you and the position title for which you interviewed.
- Include specific details about the interview to refresh the interviewer's mind about you.
- Drive home any main points that you think would be helpful, such as your skills.
- Briefly add any relevant information that you forgot to include in your résumé or interview.
- Let the employer know that you want to continue your discussion about the position.

Think About It
- What are some skills or experiences you should highlight in your cover letter?
- What language from the job advertisement can you use in the cover letter that shows the employer you researched the company?
- What do you want to emphasize from the interview in the thank you letter?
- What can you say in your thank you letter that will let the company know how you will follow up on your interview?

Your cover letter and thank you letter are critical components of the application process because they allow you to emphasize the experiences and skills you would bring to the job. By writing an effective cover letter and following up with a thank you letter, you leave a great impression on the employer, which may help you get the job you want!

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Memos
Chapter 1, Section 3: Lesson 4

Memorandum is a formal word for what's more commonly known as a *memo.* Individuals in practically every profession use memos to communicate business or technical information, whether within a company or organisation or to outside vendors or clients. Although memos can be sent by e-mail or hard copy, they are formal messages subject to review by the company at any time.

Memos: The Basics
A memo is a short, direct note that reflects on you and your company. It's usually no more than a few hundred words or a few short paragraphs, and it's rarely over one page. A memo communicates essential information about a topic that can be discussed in more detail later. Some common situations for memos include the following:

- Distributing the minutes of a meeting
- Providing follow-up discussions from a meeting or decision
- Sharing information, such as a very brief report, with a group
- Making a short evaluation or recommendation
- Transmitting materials, such as a long report or proposal, enclosed with the memo

Pearson

Writing an Effective Memo

Knowing the intended audience and purpose of your memo will help shape its content, length, tone and approach. Ask yourself the following questions before you plan what to write:

- Should I inform my audience of something, such as a new policy or piece of equipment?
- Will I need to persuade my audience, perhaps to support company-wide changes?
- Do I need to convince my audience to take action?

Once you know whether you need to inform, persuade or convince your audience, you can plan the memo more specifically.

- Find out the proper recipient(s) or group of recipients for the memo.
- Briefly describe the memo's purpose in the subject field.
- Use the first sentence of the memo to state the purpose (be direct).
- Follow with three or four sentences elaborating on the memo's purpose:
    - What needs to be done by the recipient? What needs to be sent to the recipient?
    - Why does it need to be done? Why does it need to be sent?
    - How does it need to be done? How should a response be sent?
    - When does it need to be done? When should a response be sent?
- Be as concise as possible, giving only essential information.
- Use a formal tone without humour or inflamed language.
- Proofread your memo before sending to ensure that it's free of errors in spelling, syntax and punctuation.

Components of a Memo

Most organisations have specific memo standards that include at least the following parts:

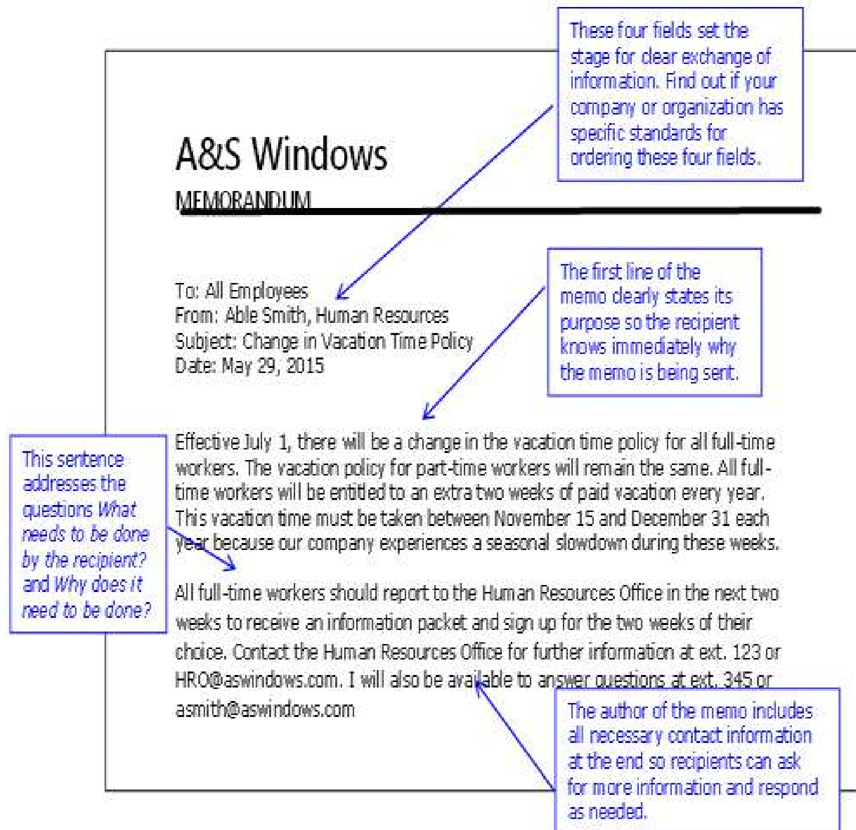
- The name of the company or organisation at the top of the memo, within an image of the letterhead, if available
- The word 'Memo' or 'Memorandum' centred or at the left margin, depending on the standards
- These four fields, usually at the top of paper memos:
    - **To:** the name of the recipient or group of recipients
    - **From:** your name (as the sender) followed by your job title or company department or division
    - **Subject:** the memo's purpose, which could also be included as 'Re:' (regarding) if you are responding to something already under discussion
    - **Date:** the date the memo is sent, format depending on the company or organisation's standards (e.g., *4 April 2015*)
- A direct, concise opening paragraph
- A body consisting of a few short paragraphs and, if needed, a request for response
- A bulleted list of technical information such as prices or specifications
- The end of the memo, which may need to include
    - Contact information belonging to you, the sender (which can be set to appear automatically on memos sent by email)
    - An offer to answer questions on the content of the memo

Depending on situational needs, the memo may also need some or all of the following:

- A signature, if required, beside your name in the From: field, at the top
- Your initials, in all caps at the bottom of the page and followed by a typist's initials, if the memo was dictated to someone else who typed it (For example, *SPA, kd*)
- Enclosures, which are also noted at the bottom of the page (For example, *Enclosures: Vehicle Title, Certified Check*)

A memo does not need a closing, such as *Sincerely*.

Sample Memo



A&S Windows

MEMORANDUM

To: All Employees
From: Able Smith, Human Resources
Subject: Change in Vacation Time Policy
Date: May 29, 2015

Effective July 1, there will be a change in the vacation time policy for all full-time workers. The vacation policy for part-time workers will remain the same. All full-time workers will be entitled to an extra two weeks of paid vacation every year. This vacation time must be taken between November 15 and December 31 each year because our company experiences a seasonal slowdown during these weeks.

All full-time workers should report to the Human Resources Office in the next two weeks to receive an information packet and sign up for the two weeks of their choice. Contact the Human Resources Office for further information at ext. 123 or HRO@aswindows.com. I will also be available to answer questions at ext. 345 or asmith@aswindows.com

Think About It

- What is your memo's purpose—to inform, persuade or convince?
- How will the intended audience help shape the memo's content?
- What essential details should the memo include to communicate its message clearly?

While writing a memo, remember to follow company or organisation standards, fill out the four field headings at the top and state your purpose quickly, clearly and briefly. If you share the essential information, use formal language and close with any necessary contact information, your memo will be complete.

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Business, Complaint and Suggestion Letters
Chapter 1, Section 3: Lesson 5

Business letters can have a variety of purposes. A complaint letter can get your opinions heard. A suggestion letter can promote change. No matter its purpose, a business letter must use careful wording. After all, a scathing, emotionally charged letter based only on a single negative experience at a restaurant will probably make the manager just as angry as you are. Share the facts without overly emotional language, discussing the company's products, services, employees or policies in an e-mail message or snail mail. A well-written letter will get your concerns noticed and produce a favourable response.

Pearson

Writing an Effective Business Letter

Usually about a page long, a business letter allows you to respectfully state your thoughts, observations or experiences to the appropriate company representative regarding the company, its employees, its products or its services. The following tips will help you write an effective business letter:

- Research the company, targeting the division of the company that fits your purpose. For example, if you're writing a letter praising a sales clerk, your best bet would be to write to the managerial department, who should be aware of how well the clerk promotes the company.
- Find the most appropriate person to receive the letter. For example, learn the name of the manager at the store so that you can address your letter to *Mr Smith, Manager* or *Ms Jones, Manager* instead of a generic *Manager*. Addressing a specific person ensures that the letter will be delivered to and read by the person most able to act on that letter.
- Keep your letter efficient with straightforward, clear language rather than long, formal phrases. For example, *due to the fact that* can easily be expressed as one word: *because.*
- Choose the most appropriate format. Two common formats are *direct* and *indirect*, both of which are described in detail below.
- Stick to the letter's original purpose. It may feel good to let go of emotions, but keeping your letter concise (to a single page) and focused will help the recipient know how to respond.
- Report the facts carefully. If your letter doesn't include crucial information, such as the restaurant number within the chain, it may be placed on the back burner because it will require the recipient to spend time finding that information before addressing your concern.
- Keep your tone professional by using respectful, neutral language and avoiding negatively charged words such as *crazy*, even if you're angry. Offending the addressee won't make him or her sympathetic to the issue. Also, be sure to use appropriate wording for the salutation and the closing (see more on this below).
- Proofread carefully. Your letter should be free of grammar, punctuation or typing errors because they'll diminish its effectiveness and credibility. Check spelling of all words, especially any proper nouns. If the manager's name isn't spelled correctly, for instance, he or she will be offended or disinterested.

The Audience and Purpose of a Business Letter

Being as familiar as possible with your audience will help to set a letter's content, length, approach and tone. Find out if there will be only one recipient or if the letter could be forwarded to others in the company. You may even want to send the letter to a wider audience if there are additional interested parties. Knowing the exact recipients can help you write to ensure that your requests are processed as quickly as possible. For instance, if the letter's recipient reads complaints from hundreds of customers on a daily basis, he or she may feel discouraged or impatient and could appreciate a considerate tone and kind words. You will also want to research what the audience can be expected to know to help you decide how detailed to be. If the person(s) reading your letter can be expected to already know technical specifications of a product, you wouldn't need to include that kind of information.

Components of a Business Letter

Letterhead: If your company or organisation uses a recognized letterhead, place it at the top of the page. If not, begin the letter with your address, as discussed next.

Return Address and Date: If your company or organisation does use a letterhead, include the date two lines below the letterhead. Check standards to see if they prefer the date at the left or right margin. If there isn't a letterhead, start by placing your return address at the left margin without your name and then followed by the date, like this:

> 929 Highland Drive
> Preston, VIC 3000
> 8 August 2015

Inside Address: Include two line spaces below the return address and date; include the inside address, still flush against the left margin. This address will include the official title of the recipient if you know it along with his or her first and last names, such as

- official title + first name + last name: *Chairman of the Board Jane Smith* OR *Ms Jane Smith*
- first name + last name, + official title: *Jane Smith, Chairman of the Board*
- first name + last name: *Jane Smith*

Salutation: Place the salutation two lines below the recipient's address. Begin it with 'Dear', follow with by the recipient's name and end with a colon, like this: *Dear Chairman of the Board Jane Smith* or *Dear Jane Smith:*

- If you don't know the recipient's name, avoid language like 'Sir' or 'Madam'; use the position instead, such as *Dear Customer Service Manager:*
- Use only the recipient's first and last name if his or her gender is unclear. For example, if you're unsure if a recipient named Jackie is male or female, simply address the letter to 'Jackie Jones' rather than 'Mr Jackie Jones' or 'Ms Jackie Jones'.

Body Text: Begin the body of your letter two lines below the salutation. Single space the paragraphs and include one line space between each paragraph, depending on your lecturer's preference or company standards. Follow this basic outline:

- Start with an introductory paragraph that identifies who you are and why you're writing.
- Include one or two body paragraphs next to support or justify the reason for writing. State any necessary details, such as the time, place and names of persons involved. Remember that this is a formal communication, so keep your paragraphs brief and to-the-point.
- End with a concluding paragraph to summarise and ask for action to be taken if needed.

Complimentary Closing: Place the closing flush left and two line spaces below the end of the body text. Keep the tone professional by using *Sincerely, Respectfully, Best wishes, Warm regards* or *Regards*. Also, capitalise only the first word (*Thank you*) if there are two.

Signature: Include the signature four or five lines below the closing (check your lecturer's requirements or your company's letter standards for exact placement). Type your full name—first and last—and, if available, your title below it. Finally, sign your name in the space between the closing and your typed signature.

Specialised Components: Enclose any additional items with your letter by noting them at the bottom. Type *Enclosures*, followed by a colon and the item(s) enclosed: *Enclosures: Completed rebate form (1), Required UPC labels (2).* If appropriate, you may also need to disclose a typist's initials, if you didn't type the letter yourself. Include your initials in front of a backslash, followed by those of the typist: SAS/ha

Two Commonly Used Business Letter Formats

Direct Approach

The direct approach works best for technical communications, such as specifying a fault in a product or service, because it shows the company representative the issue or purpose in the first sentence, using body paragraphs to give details of support. This format will keep the letter focused on the purpose that inspired it:

- Briefly state the purpose in the opening sentence of the first paragraph. Follow the opening sentence with one or two more sentences that present the essential facts, such as the date, time and place of the experience that inspired your complaint or suggestion. Keep the first paragraph to about three or four sentences to give the addressee an overview of the letter's content.
- Use the second and/or third paragraphs to explain the purpose in more detail. These paragraphs should let the recipient know the essential facts about the experience, product or service that inspired the letter.
- Summarise the situation in the final paragraph, and, if appropriate, indicate the response you expect. Clearly state your expected response to resolve the situation to your satisfaction.

Indirect Approach
The indirect approach works best for issues that could be seen as bad news or requests that will be unfavourable to the company. This approach prepares the reader with favourable or positive information before stating what's unfavourable. It builds a case for the request first before making the request. Follow this format to compose a letter using the indirect approach:

- Establish how long you've been a customer of the company or how long you've used a product or service. Establish this information in the first sentence and use dates if possible. To build your credibility, follow the opening sentence with one or two sentences explaining how regularly or frequently you used this product or service during the stated time period. Even if you haven't used the product or service for a long time, communicate your credibility by showing you've done research on the product or service.
- Use the second and/or third paragraphs to explain how you also value the company and its product or service. For instance, discuss how it will continue to help you in the future.
- Present the letter's purpose in the final paragraph and, if appropriate, indicate the type of response you expect. Provide a careful summary of the experience and its impact on you in the opening sentence. Continue by explaining how the experience reduced your faith in the product or service. State the expected response, if any, that you anticipate to resolve the situation, help you feel satisfied and avoid a similar experience happening to other customers.

Think About It

- Where should wording in your letter change so that it's free of slander but remains clear?
- Who is the audience for your letter, and what do you need to know about them?
- Which approach—direct or indirect—will work best for your intended purpose?

A well-written business letter allows you to respectfully state your thoughts, observations or experiences with a company, its employees and/or its products or services. Using the appropriate approach, polite language and a clear, focused format will help you get the response you need.

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Chapter 1, Section 4: Presentation Tasks

Digital Portfolios
Chapter 1, Section 4: Lesson 1

Have you ever wanted to make a radical change? To reinvent yourself? Portfolios—specifically digital portfolios—can let you do that in electronic form. Through your portfolio, you can see how much you've changed as a writer as well as project how much change you still plan to make.

Portfolios have long been included in many writing classrooms and as a requirement for certain types of employment. Today, however, you may be asked to compose a digital, or electronic, portfolio that reveals your writing progress over time. A thoughtfully arranged digital portfolio will showcase a collection of your work that is rich with various media and relies on intertextual and hypertextual links. Moreover, because it's digital, you own it, meaning you can take it with you long after your unit of study is over or even after your degree is in hand.

Portfolios Go Digital

Whereas print portfolios often told a single, linear story, digital portfolios can expand and are multi-faceted. Kathleen Blake Yancey, the forerunner in both print and digital portfolios, has established three main steps—known as *collection, selection* and *reflection*—to follow when creating your portfolio:

- Collect all applicable work.
- Select samples to share in the portfolio.

- Reflect on the work in order to think about what's been learned, to decide which work is strongest and why and to review the entire portfolio and plan for its future impact.

This three-step process is the basis of strong portfolio design. By following these steps, you will be prepared for the next stage, which is crafting the portfolio toward a specific purpose or type.

Types of Digital Portfolios

Digital portfolios communicate different types of information:

- Connections between academic and extra-curricular learning for admission to higher education or vocational opportunities
- Knowledge gained during a specific unit of study or departmental program
- Evidence of meeting standards for a professional certificate within your career field
- Qualifications needed for employment or job-related accomplishments for promotion
- Representation of lifelong learning for participation in public service

Your Digital Portfolio's Contents

Developing your digital portfolio should start with basic requirements, as with any other assignment. What does your lecturer want you to include in the portfolio? How many drafts of each essay or project should be included? What should you cover in your reflection? Beyond the lecturer's or program's requirements, try to make the portfolio dynamic and flexible so that you can adapt it over time; it may continuously undergo changes and be influenced by your unit of study, your lecturer, your department, your university or, more importantly, what you continue to learn about yourself as a writer and creator.

The Reflection

This element is the heart of your portfolio. It allows you to evaluate your work and note how far you've come in your studies and beyond. Ask yourself, 'What are the different learning experiences that will really show what I've accomplished?' Then, use both the explanation of how you composed various assignments and your reflection to introduce your portfolio. Whether a letter, a short essay or shorter messages scattered throughout the works in the portfolio, the reflection guides your audience through everything you include. You may have specific reflection questions to answer, but some general ones to keep in mind include the following:

- What did I learn and how did I learn it?
- Which parts of my portfolio show all that I have learned?
- Which goals did I meet (or not), and how does the content illustrate these goals?
- How can I use these learning experiences and this reflection to impact my future?

Links

The links in your portfolio will probably come from both within your writing and from outside sources and will connect your audience to the various work samples you select and share. By linking to a final draft from a rough draft, for instance, your audience will have a better glimpse of your progress as a writer. You can also provide links to works outside your portfolio (such as from other units of study or extracurricular activities), depending on your lecturer's or program's requirements. Consider including the following items as you plan out your portfolio:

- Homework
- Projects
- Journals
- Lab reports
- Spreadsheets
- Presentation notes
- Assignment drafts (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.)
- Peer review notes
- Awards

As you decide what to include and how to present it, an important goal is to invite your audience to progress through your portfolio along a variety of paths so that the experience of reading and assessing the selected materials is as engaging and dynamic as you want yourself to appear.

Technological and Designer Considerations

To provide a hassle-free audience experience, rely on these technology tips when creating your portfolio:

- Identify early how the portfolio will be accessed (online or otherwise).
- Use graphics, sound and video as appropriate to fulfil portfolio requirements.
- Link the portfolio contents through a variety of paths (with a 'table of contents', with cross referencing through hyperlinks, etc.) to appeal to different audience members, keeping the following questions in mind:
    - Where should my links come—on the left, at the bottom or at the top?
    - Which elements will link to outside sites, depending on portfolio requirements?
    - What should I link 'back' to, or how should I help the audience return 'home'?
- Test your links. Make sure everything is working as you want it to, and, if possible, have a family member or friend test the links to so that you can ensure they work cross-platform (across different computers and on different technologies).
- Consider design elements—how colour, headings, font choice and more represent you as well as the learning process you've experienced; to do so, answer the following questions:
    - How should the background colour and font colour contrast one another as well as convey something about me?
    - How much bigger should font sizes be for headings versus text?
    - What font will best represent me and the learning process explained by the portfolio?
    - What special design features (if any) should I use to show my skills and interests?

Your Audience, Now and in the Future

The way your lecturer evaluates your digital portfolio is an important part of helping you become a stronger writer. Because the portfolio is electronic, the evaluation should be as well. Prepare for this by making the portfolio digitally engaging through both content and links.

Because each digital portfolio is unique and because each composer (you!) is different, there isn't a list of common standards for all digital portfolios. Nevertheless, there are some best practices to keep in mind:

- Your learning outcome or goal should be present in each element—the reflection, the selected works and the way all of it is presented.
- You should aim to use the technology to its full potential to show evidence of your skills as an arranger and composer.
- Your portfolio should make your electronic, or online, identity clear through personalised information that establishes you as a credible author of a multi-faceted text.
- You should base the portfolio's contents and arrangement on the current audience (your lecturer or program adviser) as well as future potential audiences (employers, family, friends), considering the ever-changing nature of lifelong learning goals.
- Your portfolio's reflection can come at the beginning, the end or as the central navigational feature that explains how instruction and feedback has influenced you as a writer/composer.
- You may wish to include your online social identity (such as your social media profiles) as an element of your portfolio since employers often research this information on their own.

How to Share Your Portfolio

Depending on the audience, you may have several options for saving and sharing your portfolio:

- On your university-provided URL or web space
- On a website URL you purchase or adapt from a free website design site
- On a CD or DVD you create to share with a prospective employer

Think About It

- What documents reveal the progress you've made as a writer?

- What points will explain how this progress is reflected throughout the portfolio?
- What links make navigating the portfolio easier for your audience?

Remember, your portfolio is live and can change as you see fit. Once it's been evaluated, take it with you; make changes to it as more fantastic learning experiences come your way!

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Speech Outlines
Chapter 1, Section 4: Lesson 2

As a student, you might be asked to give a speech for a variety of reasons. Your lecturer might require each person in your class to speak about a selected topic. Alternatively, you might present research at a conference or be asked to orally defend a project or suggest a proposal. The more formal the occasion, the more likely you will want to use some form of mnemonic device, such as a speech outline. A speech outline is distinct from a slide or multimedia presentation, such as PowerPoint. Whatever the context, creating a speech outline can help you stay on topic.

An Outline, Not an Essay

Remember that you're creating an outline that will help you remember your key points and deliver your speech effectively; you're not writing an essay or a series of paragraphs to read out loud. Audiences can easily tell when a speaker is simply reading word-for-word from a print-out, even if the sheets aren't visible—the speaker's tone of voice is flat and disengaged, and the effect is lacklustre. Delivering a speech from an outline or other mnemonic device will ensure that your discussion seems genuine and lively and will allow you to better connect to the audience.

Sections of a Speech

Ideally, your outline should have at least three sections: the introduction, the body and the conclusion. If you need to turn in your speech outline for your lecturer's review, follow any special guidelines your lecturer provides about the length and format. If you're creating the outline for your own benefit, you have free reign to structure it, but keep the following guidelines in mind.

Introduction

In your introductory section, list a few of the key points that your audience should know first. To decide what your audience needs to know about your topic, consider the purpose of your speech. Are you speaking to inform the audience about a new strain of antibiotic-resistant bacteria? To convince the audience to unplug from their smartphones? To evaluate a new university energy conservation policy? Essentially, what is your topic, and what key details does the audience need to know before you get into the body of the speech? For example, if you're speaking about a local river that needs to be cleaned up, your introduction might mention its location and current status of contamination.

Body

In your outline's body section, list the key topics that your speech will cover. If, like most people, you need a bit of help to stay on track, add some brief details about each topic. For example, your speech about the river clean-up might cover solutions as one topic, funding options as a second topic and estimated timelines as a third topic.

Conclusion

In your conclusion section, list any final points you want to emphasize. While most conclusions will briefly summarise the speech's main topics or main idea, your conclusion might also include a key reflection or two or a word of advice. For example, your speech about the river clean-up might share how audience members can get involved and who to contact (town officials or volunteer leaders, for instance) to aid in the clean-up efforts.

Pearson

Using Bullets and Other Devices

Unless your guidelines say otherwise, feel free to use devices such as bullets, numbered or lettered lists or other formatting devices in your outline. These devices can help you present notes in a concise way while also serving to highlight key pieces of information.

For example, you could use a bullet list for your introduction, another for each topic in the body of your speech and another for your conclusion. If you want to make your outline even more detailed, consider using sub bullets, numbers or lettered subsections to include notes about each topic or section. This can also be an excellent way to remind yourself of any important statistics or quotes you may want to integrate into your presentation. Don't forget to credit your sources when you're speaking, too.

Headings can also help you identify the sections of your speech. For example, if you're placing your outline on a single sheet of paper, you could have one heading each for your speech's introduction, body and conclusion. Alternatively, you could include additional headings, such as a heading for each topic, in the body of your speech. If you are using notecards, each section of the speech might be placed on a separate notecard, making headings less necessary.

If you wish, you can also use brackets to indicate how much time you plan to spend on each section or topic, indicating the minutes each section or topic should take: (5 minutes) (10 minutes).

Choosing a Medium

As you prepare for your presentation, you should also consider how you will review your outline during your speech. If you will have a podium in front of you, you might find it easiest to bring your outline on a printed page. If you will be giving the speech without a podium, you might prefer to use a set of notecards. Either way, your outline should be easily readable so that you aren't struggling to decipher a word or phrase. Use a printer for your outline or print by hand as neatly as possible. Limit your use of a PowerPoint for outlining your speech—remember, the PowerPoint is for your audience, but your outline is for you.

Think About It

- What key topics will you cover in your speech?
- How detailed do you want your outline to be?
- How will you physically compile and review your outline?

Developing a speech is a little different from developing an essay; however, many of the considerations are the same: speechwriters must consider their audiences; develop effective introductions, bodies and conclusions; and provide powerful, credible information that will encourage their audiences to listen to what they have to say. Considering these questions can make your speech a success!

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Slide Presentations
Chapter 1, Section 4: Lesson 3

Developing a slide presentation is a common assignment, usually as a component of a corresponding oral presentation. Creating written text for a slide presentation is slightly different from creating an outline for a speech since a speech doesn't use audience-facing slides. The writing and communication skills used for slide presentations are crucial for a variety of careers and fields, so it's helpful to understand how to present your ideas effectively in this concise visual medium.

A slide presentation can serve a variety of purposes and may be used in a variety of situations. When creating presentations as part of your coursework, your audience will usually be your peers and

lecturer, but it might also include students from other classes, university administrators or community members. It's valuable, therefore, to consider both your topic and your audience as you determine the most effective way to develop your presentation. Because of the flexibility and creativity of this medium, a slide presentation can sometimes seem more difficult to develop than an essay, but that isn't the case.

Creating Slides

A slide presentation is a unique form of communication used to break down an idea or topic into key points in a visually concise way, usually with both text and graphics. It's helpful to first organise your topic into key points for your presentation. Which main considerations do you want to highlight for your audience? These key points will be the basis for the content slides in your presentation, and your content slides will follow the order of your presentation. For example, a presentation about supporting a wharf might discuss fundraising solutions in order of ascending or descending relevance or impact. Another presentation, such as one that discusses the history of the Torres Strait Islander peoples, might use chronological order. Beyond your content slides, your presentation will likely include other slides that have an organisational purpose, such as a title slide and concluding slide.

Title Slide

Include your name and the title of the presentation first, such as *A History of the Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. The slide may also include the date or other information, depending on your assignment requirements.

Introductory Slide

Present an overview of your presentation, but do so creatively based on your topic. For instance, the introductory slide might present a bullet list of your key topics, such as three or four key points in the history of the Torres Strait Islands. Alternatively, your slide could include only a single question that relays your presentation's purpose, such as *What have the Torres Strait Islander peoples experienced since the arrival of British colonisers?* When creating your introductory slide, consider a variety of options and determine what approach is most likely to interest your audience in your presentation while focusing on your purpose.

Content Slides

Content slides present the main detail of your presentation. For example, your presentation on the Torres Strait Islander peoples might have one slide for each key point in history you plan to discuss, or it might have three or four slides for each key historical moment depending on the level of detail and the length of the discussion. It's not necessary to use a slide for every detail or subtopic; the bulk of the information needs to come from you and your discussion, not your slide text. Keep written slide content brief. Most presenters avoid paragraphs and complete sentences and instead use phrases and bulleted lists. Whatever you decide, include only the most important illustrative details on your content slides; secondary details can be left for your discussion.

Concluding Slide

This slide most often presents a list of the points you addressed in your presentation, but your strategy may vary depending on the purpose of your presentation. For example, the slide could highlight key cultural influences of the Torres Strait Islander peoples and the value of understanding their unique history. The slide could include suggestions for further reading or reflection, or it could list contact details for you or a related organisation, such as an historical society or a cultural exchange program.

References Slide

Your final slide should list any references related to the information presented in your previous slides. Check with your lecturer about the preferred format for your bibliography, particularly if research was required.

Formatting Slides

Consider creating a slide outline in Word or on paper before switching to slide presentation software. That way, you're less likely to become frustrated as you try to draft while learning the software or app functions. Remember to limit slide text to the most relevant details. You might use a common strategy

like a bulleted list of illustrative details on each slide. Here's an example of a content slide about fundraising for a wharf:

Fundraising door-to-door

- Need for volunteers to be screened & registered
- Proper identification tags for all volunteers
- Defined days/times when volunteers will be out and about

In this example, the core information is presented with a list. Notice that this slide doesn't incorporate any complete sentences. There's a brief heading that establishes the key point and several relevant details that illustrate it. The slide uses circular bullets, but other devices, such as diamonds or squares, are likely acceptable.

If possible, proofread all slides on paper rather than a screen to identify any typos and errors. You might be embarrassed to find a typo in your essay, but imagine noticing a typo when presenting in front of a live audience!

Think About It

- What is your key goal or main idea in this presentation?
- How many key points will your presentation cover?
- Which details are important enough to include on each slide?

Answering these questions will help you brainstorm ideas to better organise and develop your presentation.

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Chapter 1, Section 5: Creative Writing Tasks

Short Fiction
Chapter 1, Section 5: Lesson 1

Short fiction and novels are not simply different in length: the two are plotted, packaged, shaped and styled very differently. Novels create whole worlds in which multiple characters move through stretches of time and space to achieve some goal or undergo a trial. Most short fiction, on the other hand, narrows to a specific point within a world, leading to an extraordinary moment, a moment like no other in the main character's life. By the end of a short story, that character has either changed (perhaps in a very subtle way) or failed to change.

Elements of Short Fiction

Characters

Short fiction is rarely highly populated with characters. Novels afford space for many well-drawn, memorable characters; short fiction often includes just a few. Deciding who your main character is—whom your story is about—is one of your earliest tasks. Creating those characters is the next task: your characters may be pure fabrication, but it's often easier to base them on yourself. You can take aspects of yourself and combine them with aspects of other people, including fictional characters. 'All my characters are Scott Fitzgeralds', said the creator of *The Great Gatsby,* yet they were all different and easily distinguishable. Taking some essence of yourself and putting it into a fictional creation is like daydreaming. If you've never been a safecracker who teaches particle physics, now's your chance. Do a little research, fire up your imagination, wind that character up and set them in motion.

Pearson

Plot
The essence of plot is *causation*. Without causation, a story is a seemingly random, pointless sequence of events, such as *The king died, and then the queen died.* In contrast, says E. M. Forster, '"The king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot'. How you see causation—how you imagine the world works and events lead to and impact one another—will impact the way you tell your stories.

For a story to be successful, there must be a *conflict.* Conflict comes in many forms, but the main thing to remember is that the central character must yearn for something, must want something intensely. For example, in John Cheever's 'A Country Husband', the central character survives a plane crash but cannot get anyone in his family to listen to his story: All he wants at the start is to be able to tell someone about this amazing experience. Not being allowed to do this changes him in a profound way.

Once conflict has been established—and this is usually at or near the beginning of the story—it plays out to the end. Conflict is the engine that drives the plot. It moves characters to action, even if that action is to turn back, to refuse an opportunity to change; it moves readers to turn pages, to find out what happens next. In the Cheever story, frustration at not being heard causes the husband to resent his family, to fixate romantically on a young babysitter, to behave badly, to lose his grip on reality . . . And how will it all end? Readers will want to know.

Packaging Time
Once you've got a *conflict* idea, how will you tell your story? In what order will you present events? 'Begin[ning] at the beginning' is sometimes the best idea, but not always. You may choose to begin at what Jerome Stern, in *Making Shapely Fiction,* calls the 'last lap'—right at the point where a 75-year-old grandmother is about to jump out of a plane, instead of the much earlier point when she happens across an article on parachuting in a magazine.

Beginning at the beginning is the easiest way to handle the flow of time in your narrative; if you decide to begin in the middle or even near the end, you will need to juggle *flashbacks* and *flash-forwards.* Your modern readers will be able to handle those provided you signal clearly when you're about to time-jump. Leaving a space break (four blank line spaces) will let your reader know that there's some sort of time-jump; including temporal evidence at or near the beginning of the new section—*Five months earlier, when Bertram was home recuperating from a fractured elbow* . . . —will let your readers know where the story is positioned in time.

Shaping the Story
Stories come in as many shapes as there are writerly imaginations. You might tell the story as a straightforward narrative with internal monologue or through a succession of diary entries, voicemail messages or notes in bottles washing up on a hundred different shores. You could have a story within another story or a series of letters between two or more characters. You could even choose to tell a story through emails, Facebook posts or Tweets. Playing with story-shapes forces you to come at your creation in challenging and exciting ways.

Point of View
Stories may be told from various viewpoints:

Third Person

- Single point of view: The reader has direct access to the mind of only one character.
- Dual or multiple point of view: Readers access more than one character's inner thoughts.
- No point of view: The reader can see all characters only from the outside; Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery' is a famous example.

Second Person

- The story is all about *you*, as in the infamous choose-your-own-adventure stories.

First Person

- The narrator of the story is *I*.
- The narrator of the story is *we*. (This is not nearly as common as the I-story. Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' is told from the plural first person.)

Pearson

Third person conveys a certain distance between reader and story while first person is generally more intimate. You may start out your story using, say, third person single point of view and then decide halfway in that it would be better told in the first person.

Style

In contrast to *substance*—the content, structure, shape and viewpoint of a story—*style* is the way you use language to convey that substance. Style involves several literary elements:

Tone

Your third-person tone may be formal or informal, light or dark, literal or ironic, portentous or offhand. If you're writing in the first person, there are as many tones as there are individual attitudes about the world: playful, angry, envious, resigned, terrified. Whatever tone you adopt will colour your narrative and affect your readers.

Figurative Language

Figurative language (similes, metaphors, allusions, etc.) is not intended to be flowery but to communicate precisely with readers. To borrow again from Jerome Stern, simply telling your reader that a character's hair is auburn won't contribute greatly toward what readers understand about her. Hair colour is not character. Think of it this way: describing your character's hair as the colour of mahogany will evoke positive, complex reader responses (the colour of wood in turn calling up associations like *burnished* and *fragrant*). Describing it as the colour of beef liver, on the other hand, will provoke a repulsive vision! In either case, the exact same colour of auburn is described, but the effect is different. When literal descriptions don't quite convey what you want your readers to imagine, use figurative language, and use it precisely. Show your readers what you see in your mind's eye.

Showing Versus Telling

This technique could also be described as *Scenes versus Summaries.* When planning your story, you should have an idea of which events you want to show in detail and which you want simply to describe. A *scene*, whether brief or extended, shows characters moving through time, doing things and perhaps speaking to one another. A *summary* simply sums up these events. For instance, in the Cheever story, the near-crash is presented as a scene: Simply to sum up this terrifying experience would detract from its power. But when the husband drifts through suburban life afterward, much of the 'drifting' is summed up. If the entire story were shown rather than shown and told, it would be overly lengthy and boring in spots. Summarising/telling allows writers to skip through the less interesting events to focus on the significant ones, and developing a scene/showing allows writers to build emphasis and interest at significant points.

Dialogue

When characters speak to each other, their relationships will be shown in the words they use—and don't use. Characters who know each other well won't have to spell everything out. Characters who are strangers will speak more formally, possibly more warily. Dialogue is one of the fiction writer's most powerful tools: it propels plot and embellishes character. When writing dialogue, test your lines by speaking them aloud. Do they sound like natural speech? Let your ear be your guide. But remember that natural speech is full of *umms* and *uhhhs* and *likes* which are much more boring to read than they are to hear; your dialogue should actually sound better and smoother than natural!

Think About It

- Which short story elements have you included in your beginning drafts?
- Which story elements do you now want and need to include?
- Which elements are your strongest? Which need more development?

Trust your readers. Understand that they know how the world works, and when they read your fiction, they're bringing their own experiences to the story. Remember as you write that your job is to take what's in your own head, your own imagination, and communicate it to those readers, who will take from your story what resonates most deeply with them. The more fully you imagine your story, the more powerful it will be.

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Poetry
Chapter 1, Section 5: Lesson 2

Perhaps you enjoy writing poetry but would like to become a better poet; perhaps you're not sure about poetry, but you've been assigned poetry writing in your creative writing course. Whatever the reason for your poetry writing, knowing more about the structure, style and function of poetry will help you to draft a poem worthy of admiration. There are innumerable techniques and options to choose from as you shape your poem, such as the ones described below. Remember, though, that poetry is about self-expression, and your personal style is as important as your chosen structure and forms.

Writing Poetry

As you set out to write a poem, you will move through two crucial stages: creating and revising. Below are some tips to help you get started:

Creating

The best way to begin is to simply start writing. You can start by getting a notebook reserved for writing. In it, record words, images, phrases and ideas that strike you as interesting or appealing. You may not use all of them, but when you're stuck and need inspiration, you can grab an item from this list as the starting point for a new poem.

Freewriting is a great way to create a poem. Freewriting starts with observation. When you see a person or scene that impacts you, take mental notes, and then, as soon as you can, sit down to write about these memories as they come to you. Try freewriting for a predetermined block of time, perhaps by writing for ten minutes without stopping. You might think of a memory in pieces, writing each piece on its own. Don't feel like you need to use complete sentences nor like you need to link ideas together—let your thoughts flow. Just get the memory in writing, and then, when you're done, sit back and see what you've got. You can also freewrite by using a line from a poem you like as the core of your own poem. Start by writing down that line and then spend your freewriting time building on it. Make sure to cut the borrowed line entirely when you revise so that you do not plagiarise another writer's work.

Revising

After generating material to work with, you're ready to think about revising. How does the mass of words in front of you become a poem? No one writes a perfect poem the first time. The American poet Elizabeth Bishop kept unfinished poems tacked to her walls for years, waiting for the right word to complete them. Each time you revise a poem, treat it as if it's a new creation. Time is the best method; even a few days can give you a clean perspective. Reading the poem after time has passed will help you see which words to change, which lines to tinker with and which images to enhance. Along with time, use these strategies to revise:

- Read or sing the poem aloud, tapping your fingers to its rhythm.
- Read it backwards, line by line to see each line individually.
- Have someone else read the poem to you to appreciate it from a different perspective.
- Tack it to a wall or leave it open on your computer's desktop so that you will see it periodically as you're doing other things.

As you revise, trust your instincts, but also think about the questions below:

Is the language concrete? Some of the best poems talk about abstract concepts by using concrete language. Concrete nouns, adjectives, adverbs and strong verbs convey clear ideas that refer to concrete objects or to abstract ideas like love, peace and anger. You want readers to get close enough to feel the way you do because when readers can see and feel a message the poem can move them. For example, *a bush with some flowers* doesn't have nearly the same impact as *the Rose of Sharon in the backyard of my childhood home, where mom and I hunted for caterpillars in the springtime.*

What tools will add sound effects? Poetry is about using language to make music. It takes advantage of all the sound patterns in language: *consonance* (similar consonant sounds), *assonance* (similar vowel sounds), *alliteration* (same initial sounds) and *rhyme* (similar word endings, like *trance* and *glance, darkness in* and *discipline, daze* and *always*). It may even use onomatopoeia (words that imply sounds, like *rrrrip* or *crack*).

How can rhythm help convey a message? Poetry also makes use of *repetition* (the recurrence of phrases or sentence structures and *meter* (the patterns of stress in words). You can place stressed syllables in opposition with unstressed syllables in a way that provides movement and momentum. Consider this common childhood prayer: ***Now*** *I* ***lay*** *me* ***down*** *to* ***sleep*** */ I* ***pray*** *the* ***Lord*** *my* ***soul*** *to* ***keep****.* The bold words are syllables that receive more verbal emphasis or punch. In this case, they're always countered by *unstressed syllables*. Countering stressed syllables against unstressed syllables produces an unmistakable rhythm, evoking a steady, rocking beat.

- If you have trouble recognising stressed syllables, try using a dramatized reading, emphasising different syllables each time. For instance, try reading the following with emphasis on the bold syllables and a softening of the non-bold syllables: *Now* ***I*** *lay* ***me*** *down* ***to*** *sleep*. You will likely notice quickly how unnatural it sounds. Pronunciation places natural emphases on certain syllables, and those that are naturally emphasized are considered stressed.

Which conventional grammar rules might be bent or broken? Poetry lets you move past grammar rules in favour of music and meaning. As you reread your poem, look for run-ons, comma splices and sentence fragments, just as you would in an essay. Then ask whether they serve a purpose. For instance, does the comma splice create a rhythmic sensation that you want, as in this line from 'O Captain! My Captain!': 'My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still'? (To see bibliographic information for this poem and others quoted below, see References.) Look for places where language is used creatively. For example, does subject–verb reversal help convey a more striking image, as in 'While follow eyes the steady keel'? If these variations work, then keep them. Don't just break rules on a whim; make purposeful choices for rhythmic reasons.

Are my images working as well as they can? With all this talk of concrete language and sentence construction, it should come as no surprise that images are crucial to good poetry. An image can use the senses to make an idea clearer. Rather than saying *My feet moved slowly*, for instance, create an unexpected image through the sense of touch to convey just how slowly these feet were moving: *My feet shuffled me through a field of mud-covered feathers.*

What similes or metaphors could add other layers of meaning? Poets often compare things to each other through *simile* (using *like* or *as* to compare one object with another) and *metaphor* (replacing one object with another).

- Theodore Roethke placed a simile in the first stanza of his well-known poem, 'My Papa's Waltz': 'The whiskey on your breath / Could make a small boy dizzy / But I hung on like death'. No matter what, the speaker is not letting go, and the simile *hung on like death* conveys that effectively.
- Shakespeare used a metaphor to talk about the sun when he wrote, 'Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines'. Here, *the eye of heaven* adds a layer of meaning because it's unexpected and stands in for a commonplace word.

Types of Poetry

One of the best ways to discover the possibilities for writing engaging poetry is to read poetry as much as you can. While there is a myriad of different types of poems, knowing two common categories can help you get some initial ideas about the poem you want to write.

Fixed Forms

A fixed-form poem is one that fits a traditional set of rules about repetition, meter, rhyme and other patterns. For example, you may have seen or needed to write a sonnet, which is a short poem of 14 lines that are divided into two, three or four sections. Sonnets can follow several different rhyming patterns and are usually written in *iambic pentameter.* These two lines are from an English (or

Shakespearian) sonnet: 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate'. English sonnets are made up of three four-line stanzas (called *quatrains*) and one two-line stanza (or *couplet*), but the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet consists of one eight-line stanza (*octave*) and one six-line stanza (*sestet*).

There are other fixed forms, such as the villanelle (a poem of 19 lines divided across six stanzas with a very particular rhyme scheme), the terza rima (with an interlocking rhyme scheme) and the rondeau (15 lines within three stanzas using a refrain throughout). However, you might prefer a haiku, which doesn't rhyme but is a fixed form—three unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables, respectively.

Narratives
Narrative poetry isn't recognized by a system of set stanzas or rhyme schemes. Instead, narrative poetry tells stories. If you have a story to tell and need to write a poem, consider crafting an epic, a romance or a ballad. An epic and a romance are typically longer poems. Epics tell about a hero or heroic actions while romances share love stories in lyric verse or verse that sounds like a song. A ballad also tells a story, but it's usually short and is written with the intentions of being sung.

Free Verse
A less formal type of poetry is known as free verse. These poems don't fit a traditional set of rules. They may still use repetition, meter, rhyme and other patterns, but they don't have a set form to follow. Instead, you get the chance to create your own set of standards for how to use those tools. T.S. Elliot's *The Wasteland* is a well-known example of free verse:

> The barges wash
> Drifting logs
> Down Greenwich reach
> Past the Isle of Dogs.
> Weialala leia
> Wallala leialala

Free verse isn't restricted by rhyming patterns or formatting, and it can, as seen here, use creative word choice to express its message. Free verse poetry isn't easily broken down into 'types' since it relies on the natural rhythm behind the emotion that inspires the poem's message. A free verse poem may or may not use rhyme; instead, it could emphasize its message through repetition. Free verse can even be playful, as in a spatial poem, which uses its structure to create an image on the page of whatever it is written to express (consider the works of e e cummings).

Think About It

- Which type of poem suits your purpose best?
- Where could you use devices like assonance or consonance to make music through the language of your poem?
- Where can you continue playing with the rhythm and structure of your verse?

Check with the assignment guidelines or your lecturer first, and experiment with topics and forms. Certain topics will be easier for you to adapt to certain types of poems. Finally, be willing to adjust the language and images and words as you compose and revise. A well-crafted poem comes over time and is something to be greatly appreciated by you and your readers!

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Chapter 2: Preparing to Write Your Essay
Chapter 2, Section 1: Prewriting

Analysing Your Audience
Chapter 2, Section 1: Lesson 1

When you sit down to write, keep in mind that everyone has her or his own set of beliefs, opinions and values. Your audience members will have varying degrees of knowledge and understanding when it comes to your topic. Depending on where they work and/or go to school, where they come from and how they've been asked to think about the ideas you're discussing, they will all have different sets of expectations when they read what you say. All of these things ultimately affect how readers will respond to your message. To help increase your awareness of the group you may be writing to, ask some questions about them before you sit down and write and as you revise. These questions fall into three different categories:

- Who exactly are you writing to?
- What do you hope to accomplish by writing to them?
- How or where will the document be used?

These concepts will affect your message as well as how you might choose to get it across. In general terms, the people you're writing to are your audience. What you hope to accomplish is your purpose. The situation in which the message is used is its context.

Audience

Your audience members may vary wildly, but for most of your writing, you will be developing messages for academic audiences. These readers are intelligent and usually experienced in the academic discipline for which you are writing, but they often need background information to understand your discussion. They appreciate logical, linear writing that is clear and has a main idea, or purpose, propelling it forward. When writing for an academic audience, your writing can benefit from data, statistics, factual evidence and other forms of evidence.

You may also find yourself writing for different audiences inside or outside of the classroom. Should you find yourself writing in a different context, you may also want to consider other audience types.

- **Formal Audiences:** These audiences include the mature, educated public that you are likely to encounter at work or in formal civic situations (e.g., professionals of the law, officers of courts or judicial systems, administrators at organisations or educational institutions). Formal audiences generally appreciate clear, straightforward, well-written prose in memos, emails, letters and other communications.
- **Hostile Audiences:** These audiences disagree with you on a certain point of contention, and they may also be considered informal, formal, academic or online. To connect with a hostile audience, you must communicate with them in a way that is sensitive to their concerns and/or interests in your topic. If you find yourself writing on political matters or controversial issues, you will likely need to consider a potentially hostile audience. It's important to allay, refute and persuade a hostile audience's concerns in order to convince them that your own views are valid. You may even sway a few opinions to your way of thinking if you handle this audience well!
- **Online Audiences:** If you are writing in an online context, such as for a special interests website, a blog, a form of multimedia (like a meme) or to review a product or service, you will likely be connecting with an online audience. Online audiences are large and varied. With over 3 billion people having access to the Internet and people logging on across the globe, you will encounter people with views, ideas and experiences vastly different from your own. However, the individuals who read your writing will likely share at least one of your interests—the one you're writing about! You can think of these audiences as individuals who are interested in your topic and appeal to that interest when you are writing.

- **Creative Audiences:** Creative content, like short fiction; narrative-driven, non-fiction writing; and poetry are likely to draw a creative audience. Just like creative writing itself, creative audiences are more open and flexible, and depending on what you are writing, you may use your creative licence to include dialogue with profanity, slang or sentence constructions that would otherwise be inappropriate in academic or formal writing, or perhaps even compositions for the same unit of study. Use your assignment description as a guide for any boundaries or restrictions in addressing your creative audience.

Note, these categories, as well as other types of audiences, can blend and mix, but understanding the different types of audiences you may encounter can help you target your writing to communicate more effectively.

Purpose

The purpose of your writing is what you hope to accomplish. For example, if you had to explain an assignment to a friend or family member, you would probably start by saying, 'I'm writing an essay for my lecturer exploring how culture impacts the willingness of Aboriginal peoples to seek medical attention'. The purpose, then, is for you to complete an assignment to demonstrate understanding or proficiency and earn mark. To write effectively in a classroom setting, you might find it helpful to think beyond the academic exercise you're completing and consider how the assignment you've been given might fulfil a broader purpose to enlighten your potential readers, namely your lecturer and perhaps your peers if you will be sharing your writing.

Context

The situation in which you use a message is its context. Much of the writing you do may be for a particular unit of study; being aware of context means, in part, understanding the expectations of your lecturer in terms of what he or she may expect of an assignment when you turn in the final draft. Context applies outside the classroom as well: different contexts ask you to use different language; you wouldn't typically write to a lecturer the same way you would write an email to a close friend.

Think About It

- What is your purpose or goal in writing?
- Who, specifically, are you writing to?
- Who will be using this writing, and where and when will they be using it?

By answering these questions and others like them, you will be well on your way to successfully analysing the audience you plan to address.

See Also Chapter 1, Section 1, Lesson 1: Analysing The Prompt

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Recognising and Overcoming Writer's Block
Chapter 2, Section 1: Lesson 2

Every writer has had that experience of sitting in front of the keyboard, ready to write, but the screen stares back—empty. For whatever reason, the words just won't come. No matter how simple the assignment may appear to be, the ideas just aren't there. Panic sets in.

Blanking out when faced with a writing assignment is a common form of writer's block: the inability to come up with ideas and/or translate them into a well-organised, well-developed piece of writing. Most writers, whether they're students who are new to writing or well-known authors, experience writer's block. Let's talk about some strategies you can use the next time this happens to you!

Writer’s Block vs. Procrastination
The difference between writer’s block and procrastination is a fine line. At some point, you may be faced with an assignment you just don’t want to do. In the case of writer’s block, however, it’s more than just not wanting to do the project; rather, it’s an inability to actually do it. Procrastination may be a symptom of writer’s block. If you find that you’re putting off that essay because your mind freezes when you try to think about it, you may be experiencing some level of writer's block.

Levels of Writer’s Block
There are a number of identifiable levels of writer's block:

- The temporary lapse block: the inability to capture the ‘right’ words when needed
- The situational block: working under a deadline, conflicting obligations, social demands
- The emotional/cognitive block: related to emotional strain, cognitive inability to write and/or language deficiency.

Hurdling the Blocks
In order to get over writer's block, writers need to identify what’s keeping them from writing.

The Temporary Lapse Block: Temporary lapses include the inability to capture the right words. This block may be caused by a number of factors: (1) not having enough knowledge or background information about your subject, (2) unfamiliarity with the task of the assignment and (3) over-emphasising the small things.

Getting organised, gathering your resources and conducting research before you start to write may help with this sort of writer’s block. For example, when writing an essay where you are taking a position on a controversial issue, try writing your position and reasons for why you take that position before you start to construct the paper’s body. This will define the scope of your essay, which in turn will help you articulate your position and get your ideas going.

The Situational Blocks: These blocks are related to working under a deadline, dealing with conflicting obligations and working to meet social demands. Students enrolled at university often must deal with multiple important assignments due the same week or even the same day. Juggling these demands can cause stress. In addition, many university students balance not only school and social obligations, but also demands from family and outside employment.

There are several ways to proactively manage this kind of block. First, give yourself enough time to meet deadlines. Many students find it helpful to put all their assignments on a calendar so they can plot out when each one is due. You can also set incremental milestones for pre-writing tasks, like essay plans and drafts. Reward yourself with a small treat, such as a walk or a break with friends, to motivate you and keep you from this form of writer’s block.

Emotional/Cognitive Blocks: These blocks relate to emotional strain, the cognitive inability to write and/or language deficiencies. They’re often complex to deal with, but by taking one step at a time, they can be overcome. Outside jobs, family members and other issues in your personal life can create added stress. Some students also grapple with the fact that English is their second language, and words may not come as naturally as they do for native speakers.

While it may not be entirely possible, try to reduce stress when you’re working on a tough project. Developing a healthy lifestyle that includes adequate sleep and exercise can help you manage these kinds of blocks. You may find that even with your best efforts, outside stressors make it difficult to write. Consider seeking guidance from a tutor or your lecturer to help you get started. Finally, don’t be afraid to ask for help, especially if it’s needed with your language or writing abilities. If you find that you need help because English is not your first language, you might try using words in your native language during your first draft and going back to translate them when you are revising. Doing so will at least give you the chance to put your ideas down on paper, which is the first step in developing your essay.

More Strategies for Dealing With Writer's Block

While writer's block can be frustrating, there are some ways to avoid experiencing it. Avoiding these negative strategies will help you focus on getting out of the block:

- Be kind to yourself and your writing—it's hard work! Remember that the best ways to get better at it are write, write, write, and read, read, read!
- Always listen to what people like and what they don't understand in your writing. These are cues that can help you use your strengths and strengthen your weaknesses.
- Write a little every day. The more you write, the easier it gets! In addition, you will practise strategies that will help you avoid and overcome writer's block in the future.
- Set manageable goals. Keep in mind that writing is a craft and an art. These things require study and attention to technique and development of style. Evaluate where you are, and then figure out what you need to learn to get you to the next stage. One step at a time goes a long way.
- Stay open to many ideas. If you focus on one thing, you may shut out the millions of other possibilities. Look at your project from different perspectives. Try a different voice or format. Move to the next step and come back to the issue that's stopping you. Giving yourself the permission not to worry about it often opens up options you might not have considered.

Think About It

- When do you seem to experience writer's block?
- What does this say about what causes your writer's block?
- What suggestions from this reading do you think you can use the next time you experience writer's block?

Remember: Everyone experiences writer's block at some time. It's important to note when you think it most frequently happens to you so you can deal with its causes. Through perseverance and practice, you can overcome writer's block next time!

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Using Invention Methods
Chapter 2, Section 1: Lesson 3

Most people know what it's like to feel out of their element, to be out of place or at a loss for words in an awkward situation. In those instances, sometimes the best option is to push aside the awkwardness and just jump right in. For instance, walk up to a group of people and say, 'Hi'. Dance and have fun at a wedding. Go out with friends and suggest a new restaurant. What's the worst that could happen? More than likely, everyone will have a great time.

Writing is a little like that sometimes. It feels awkward because it makes you plunge into the unknown, especially if you have no idea what to write about or if you feel unpractised in your writing. However, awkward moments can be productive moments. Using various invention methods can get you past the awkward stage and on to freely flowing ideas and strong writing.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming taps into aspects of creative thinking that writers too often push aside. It may feel natural to censor or edit as you write, but brainstorming relies on a different assumption—silly ideas often lead to good and interesting ideas.

The point of brainstorming is to generate as many creative ideas as possible in order to come away with one (or more) really useful idea in the end. Think fast and keep ideas short. You can always flesh out details later. Also, know that every idea is a good idea when you brainstorm, even those that

might initially strike you as silly or outrageous. Withhold your judgement until later stages of the process. That way, you can focus on writing unfamiliar or new points—they are just what you want!

While there are various brainstorming techniques, they usually involve the same basic process: the use of *free association*, or the spontaneous flow of ideas. The trick is to let your thoughts run their own course in order to spark new and interesting ideas and images. You can brainstorm on your own or in a group. Here are a few possibilities:

Timed Brainstorming

- Open a new document (or get a blank sheet of paper).
- Set a time limit for how long you're going to brainstorm. If you're new to this, consider a fifteen-minute session. You might set a timer to go off after fifteen minutes or use a fifteen-minute segment of music. When the music stops, you know the session is done.
- For the full fifteen minutes, write down ideas as they come to you. Don't censor, edit or correct spelling. It doesn't matter what you write so much as that you write. Let your thoughts flow, and, as they flow, write them on that document or paper.
- If you reach the end of your set time and find that you're still on a roll, you can always continue. However, in general, you will come to a point where stepping back and evaluating the ideas you've written seems right. Remember, you can always begin another session when you're ready.

Free Association

- Write down the basic issue or idea you want to address. For instance, you might start by paraphrasing the assignment or paper topic.
- Jot down thoughts quickly. Write down whatever comes to mind related to your assignment or topic. You do *not* need to use complete sentences to record your thoughts. The key is to come up with ideas and simply record them.
- Try different patterns for recording ideas. You might jot down ideas by beginning at the top and continuing down the page as thoughts come up. You could also begin in the middle and develop different clusters of associated ideas. Don't feel limited to words and phrases—use drawings or graphics if they help you develop and remember new ideas.

Evaluating and Sorting

After you've timed yourself or used free association, you will want to take some time to sit back and review your ideas. You probably came up with some new and interesting options. Add some notations to these thoughts: Circle or highlight points that seem worth keeping, cross out or delete ideas that seem like dead ends, draw lines between points that connect, move ideas around to see new juxtapositions and relationships among different points and/or add new ideas as they occur to you.

Creating a Mind Map

When you *map* an essay plan, you use an invention method that lets you look at the relationships between the things you already know but haven't quite connected. You may not even know your exact topic when you start, but as you find connections, the topic will reveal itself. One thing to have in mind is that there's no right or wrong way to create a map. It's a visual that really only needs to make sense to you.

For example, consider how you might map an assignment that requires you to analyse a case study. You could start by drawing a large circle at the centre of a clean page and putting the name of the case study at its centre. Then, you might fill in the details of the case study: Who does it involve? What are some of the conflicts that arise? What are some of the core issues of morality, ethics and/or management that impact the situation or its plausible solutions? Once you've written some of these ideas down, you can start putting them in categories. Which of the words relate to morality? Which deal with business practices or management? You could use colours to help you keep track of the concepts, perhaps red for morality and blue for management. The colour-coding can help you determine what you might place in a paragraph. For instance, management concerns, blue, could be their own paragraph or could have a separate paragraph for each individual concern that is marked with blue (and the paragraphs could be grouped together in the essay). You can keep going from there and expanding on your details and concepts using the requirements of the assignment to help

you stay focused on the details you need to include. The more details that emerge as the map expands, the more material you will have for your paper.

Clustering

Clustering is a way to organise ideas—first to find similarities and secondly to make connections. It's a way of working through ideas to categorise them. From there, you can step back and consider your controlling/main idea for your draft. You can use clustering for any kind of essay. For example, suppose your lecturer has asked you to develop an essay that reflects on your recent experiences working at a hospital. Having worked at the hospital for several months, you find that there's a lot of information to cover. To organise your thoughts and begin creating a plan by clustering, follow these steps:

- Grab a blank sheet of paper or open a new document.
- Make a small circle in the middle and write 'My Experiences at the Hospital' in it.
- Draw lines pointing outward from the circle—as many as you need for the different experiences that come to mind as memorable or strong.
- At the ends of the lines, write one experience that had a particularly strong impact on you.
- Extend those experiences by adding details around them that will clarify why they were valuable to you and what you took away from them.
- Use arrows to show which details connect back to your key point or purpose in reflecting on your experience at the hospital (e.g., what you learned).
- Sort each experience based on those which include the strongest details with clear connections to the reflection you have about your experiences.
- Keep what's strong and clear and use it to begin to form an outline.

Journaling

There is no one 'right' way to keep a journal, so be sure to experiment a little to find the journaling technique that's most useful to you. The basic idea of journaling is to keep a regular record of your thoughts, reactions and ideas so that you can use them when it's time to sit down and write an essay. For example, suppose you have been asked to write an essay about an article you read for your studies. You're not sure how to get started, and you want to find a way to get your ideas down.

Creating a journal entry will help. Your journal might consist of notes on an article you read a week ago, such as the key premises or hypotheses you remember, but you could also be more open, writing down reactions or thoughts about certain ideas or concepts. In this case, try splitting the pages in your journal into two columns, one for *Notes on the Article* and another for *Thoughts on the Article.* In the left column, write down all of the details from the article that you could use to support the points you might make in your essay. In the right, jot down your reactions to the article, whether it was a striking statistic, some phrasing that struck you as biased or unclear or a concern you have about the findings.

When you finish, review your journal and begin putting an essay together. The *Notes* column will have quotations or references to important concepts in the article. The *Thoughts* column will help you understand your overall opinion of the article and what you think the article accomplished.

If journaling sounds like it could be a useful strategy, try getting into the habit of writing daily. Keep notes on whatever you read, watch or discuss for your class. The more you write, the easier it will be to keep writing when it's time to compose an essay!

Freewriting

Like journaling, freewriting is a way to get your ideas flowing without worrying about structure, organisation, tone and so on. You will be able to more easily access your best ideas *while* you're actually writing.

Freewriting is the process of **writing without stopping**. Don't stop to think of the right word. Don't stop to think of what you should say next. Just write and write and don't stop. Try to either fill a page

or write for five minutes without picking up your pen or lifting your fingers from the keyboard. Of course, feel free to develop your own guidelines depending on what works best for you.

Much of what you write may be too random or freeform to include in an essay or writing project. Usually, though, writers will find that after they've spent part of the page (or a few minutes) writing down ideas and thoughts, they begin to get a better sense of where the writing can go, what ideas might be interesting to explore and how those ideas could be communicated to an audience.

Consider this example of freewriting from a student who has to write a reflective essay about a significant experience from his past. He can't think of a strong topic, so he writes:

- *Okay here goes I don't really have any idea what I'm going to write about and in fact I'm not sure anything that significant ever happened to me anyway. When I was 2 I fell down the stairs and broke my arm, but I don't really remember that very well and I'm not sure how 'significant' it was anyway. My grandmother was diagnosed with cancer when I was 15. It was really hard to see her go through all the treatments and know I couldn't do anything to help. She eventually went into remission, but she lost a lot of the friends she made in her cancer support group, and she still talks about how it could have easily been her. I worry a lot about her and my family and it's hard to be away from them but enrolling in medicine makes me feel like I could help someone who is in the same situation as Gran.*

In this example, the student wrote without looking back; he didn't even stop to correct spelling mistakes. While he may not have any sentences that will make it into a final draft, he has come a long way toward finding a topic. Near the end of this short freewriting exercise, he is writing about how his grandmother's experiences with cancer influenced him to enrol in medicine. If he decides he doesn't want to write about this topic, he could try freewriting again to see if any other topics come to mind.

Think About It

- Which invention method will work best for your current assignment?
- Which invented ideas will have the strongest connections, details or support?
- Which topic seems to be the one you will have the most to write about?

Trying out and using the various invention methods described above can jumpstart just about any type of essay. Sitting down to write by inventing can make the writing process a lot more relaxed and creative. Have fun with it!

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Creating an Essay Plan
Chapter 2, Section 1: Lesson 4

The success of any project often relies on how well it was planned. An academic assignment is no exception. Although it may feel tempting to start writing as soon as you receive an assignment, completing a planning process will save you time in the long run. For each writing assignment, consider planning your main idea, paragraph topics and supporting details before you write a draft. Some methods for planning these aspects of your draft are described below.

Planning the Main Idea

The main idea is the essence of your essay or document. It's usually stated somewhere in the introduction, but you need to know what it's going to be before you write a draft. The assignment instructions will help you determine what type of main idea is appropriate. For example, if the assignment prompt states, *Critically assess the impact of 1:1 laptop initiatives on writing assessment for adolescent learners*, the writer should decide whether the impact of 1:1 laptops on writing assessment has been mostly positive or mostly negative. (Even if there are a combination of benefits

and drawbacks, the main idea is about whether the laptop initiative is generally useful for writing educators.)

Planning Paragraph Topics

After you know your main idea, you will be ready to choose your paragraph topics. The paragraphs of your essay will fall into three main categories:

- Introduction (usually one paragraph but sometimes more)
- Body Paragraphs (usually several of these)
- Conclusion (usually one paragraph but sometimes more)

Each body paragraph should have a specific topic that serves the larger purpose of your essay. The assignment prompt can help you determine what types of body paragraph topics are appropriate. For example, if your assignment is to take a stance or argue a position, each body paragraph should focus on a separate reason or line of argument. If your assignment is to write about effects of a historical event, each body paragraph should focus on a separate effect.

After you decide what types of body paragraph topics are appropriate, you can make a list, which is your basic essay plan. This is also called an informal outline. Here is an example of how that would work for the assignment prompt, *Critically assess the impact of 1:1 laptop initiatives on writing assessment for adolescent learners.*

Main Idea: The use of 1:1 laptop initiatives has positively impacted several aspects of writing instruction and assessment for adolescent learners.

Essay Structure:

- Introduction
- Historical overview of using 1:1 laptops for writing assessment
- How laptops improve engagement via multi-media content
- How laptops expand the range of possible writing assessments
- How laptops facilitate student participation in the writing process
- How laptops enable educators to deliver personalised feedback
- How laptops improve access to academic support services
- Conclusion

When you make your list of paragraph topics, you might even share it with your lecturer or a tutor to get feedback. This step is also useful if you are doing an essay in which you will reference outside sources. In that situation, if you choose your paragraph topics early in the research process, you can use your body paragraph topics as search phrases to find the most relevant information. You will likely need to do some research before making an essay plan so that your paragraph topics are well-informed, but it’s useful to do additional research after you know the general direction of your essay. In this way, the writing and research processes are recursive.

Planning Supporting Details

After you complete an essay plan, you may even decide to plan some of the supporting details or evidence for each body paragraph. You might list questions for each body paragraph that you want to answer during your research. If you have already done some brainstorming or research, you might list the details you already know you will include in each body paragraph. Using the example of the student laptop topic, to plan the supporting details for the paragraph *How laptops improve access to academic support services*, one could list these details as well as the sources they intend to paraphrase:

- How laptops improve access to academic support services
- Online writing tutors (Wixon, 2016)
- Online writing handbooks
- Grammar diagnostic programs (Roberts & Diaz, n.d.)
- Applications that support writers with disabilities

You don't need to know exactly what you want to say in each body paragraph as that may change, but planning some general types of supporting details can make the drafting phase more efficient.

Think About It

- What main idea is most appropriate for your assignment?
- What body paragraph topics will help you develop that main idea?
- What supporting details might you include in each body paragraph?

Considering these questions may seem like 'extra work', but they save time and frustration in the long run. Through careful planning, you can set yourself up for success!

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Chapter 2, Section 2: Researching and Referencing

The Academic Research Process
Chapter 2, Section 2: Lesson 1

Many academic assignments will require you to read and reference the work of experts who have studied your topic. For some assignments, these outside sources may be predetermined. For example, a writing assignment may require you to read and reference texts that were assigned by your lecturer. Other writing assignments may require you to choose credible and relevant outside sources that support your topic. For most university assignments, those sources should be considered 'academic'. When an assignment requires outside research, you can use the following steps to complete a successful research process.

Determine Your Research Goals

Before you begin looking for outside sources, consider what types of questions you need to answer or what type of evidence you want to look for. In some cases, you might read a few sources preliminarily in order to make an essay plan that you can use to guide your main research process. An essay plan is a list of body paragraph topics. The plan might change as you get further in the research process, but you can use those preliminary body paragraph topics to decide what type of information you need to consider. If you are answering a series of assignment-prompt or research questions, you might make a list of what type of information you need to find in order to answer each question.

Suppose an assignment prompt asks students to *critically assess the impact of 1:1 laptop initiatives on writing assessment for adolescent learners.* One could do some preliminary research in the course texts to list several possible ways that laptops facilitate writing assessment. Each 'way' is a possibility for one body paragraph topic in the draft, but the student will need to do the main research before setting those body paragraph topics in stone. However, the student can use each 'way' as a search phrase in an academic database. If one possible 'way' is that laptops increase participation in peer-editing workshops, an example of a search phrase would be *1:1 laptops and peer editing*.

Verify the Source Requirements

The most common requirement at universities is to use academic sources. The definition of 'academic' may vary by academic discipline or assignment, so check with your lecturer or academic department if you are unsure about what standards your sources should follow. When assignments require academic sources, students should generally use academic databases to find sources, and the most common type of academic source is a peer-reviewed journal article. You may also be permitted to use government reports or academic book-length studies. Newspapers and magazines may have relevant or reliable information, but assignment requirements vary for using these layperson sources. You should usually avoid sources such as social media, blogs or wikis.

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Search for Relevant Sources

After you have a sense of what information to look for and what types of sources are appropriate, you can begin the search process. Depending on the source requirements, you may have the option to use academic databases, your school library and, in some cases, the Internet.

Academic Databases

In most cases, academic research will take place in an academic database, which you will probably access via your school library's website. An academic database is a collection of peer-reviewed journals and other sources that your university subscribes to. The vast majority of libraries now use computer databases to access their periodical indexes, such as JSTOR, EBSCO and Pro-Quest, and you can often access your library's database subscriptions from any computer. When your school library's website includes access to academic databases, the library website usually includes instructions and strategies for using this technology, and you will also usually have a user ID and password to access those databases. After you are logged into the database, you can type your search phrases and narrow your search results by certain criteria, such as publication date or 'peer review'.

When you do a search in an academic database, you will likely see more results than you intend to use. One way to narrow your selection further is by skimming the abstracts of your top choices. An abstract is a summary of an article's content that is usually less than 250 words, so you can use abstracts to decide which articles are worth downloading and reading.

The University Library

This option may not apply if you are completing an online program, but most brick-and-mortar universities include one or more physical libraries where you can access hard copies of certain sources or consult with librarians about the research process. If book-length studies are appropriate, you can use your library's online card catalogue to search for possible books that you can access in hard copy at the physical library location or electronically. The easiest way to access a library's catalogue is usually through the library's website, which you can often do from any computer, including your home computer. Some libraries also offer tablet or smartphone apps that allow you to search the catalogue and manage your library account.

The Internet

You may also have the option to use the Internet for your research. If you use a general search engine, be prepared to evaluate how well the source meets the required standards. You might look for search engines that focus on academic sources, such as Google Scholar. When you use general search engines, you will likely see a variety of appropriate and inappropriate sources. Using the Internet for academic research requires savvy about which sources are vetted or credible and which sources are informal or personal (such as personal websites and blogs). Whereas search results such as websites, blogs and wikis may not meet academic standards, sources such as government or institutional websites might offer relevant and appropriate information. However, it's important to check with your academic department and/or lecturer to determine if you are able to use such websites.

Many of these resources, like traditional search engines, make use of Boolean terms. These are unique terms that you can use in the search field to expand, narrow or otherwise adjust your results. A resource, such as a library catalogue, might use drop-down menus that allow you to apply Boolean terms while another resource such as Google might require that you type the Boolean terms into the search field. You might want to use the following Boolean terms to expand and narrow your search:

- *AND* between keywords lets you find sources that include two specific words (e.g., multiple *AND* intelligences). *AND* narrows your search. In some search engines, the *AND* is represented by a plus (+).
- *NOT* also narrows your search. For example, wallabies *NOT* rugby will narrow your search to wallabies as marsupials or some other uses of the word. In some search engines, the *NOT* is represented by a minus (-).
- *OR* between keywords will expand the search. *OR* tells the search engine to find sources that include either one of two words, sometimes synonyms (e.g., students *OR* youth).
- Wildcard characters like * and ? let you shorten a term while broadening the search (e.g., if you type writ* as your keyword, you can get results for writer, writers and writing).

If you combine these terms, your searches can become even more precise. For more information about keyword searches, email or visit your librarian or use your library's 'Live Chat' service, if available.

Analyse and Evaluate the Data

As you read each source that you obtain from the search process, analyse and evaluate it. During or after your initial reading of a source, consider its relevance to your topic and the credibility of the author(s). If you have used the Internet for some of your research, you will likely need to consider how well the source meets each of the requirements for outside sources. Doing so might involve looking at the author's credentials, any of the author's biases and how well the author references outside sources to maintain academic integrity. Does the source contain facts or details that will help you develop each body paragraph topic? Does the source contain information that requires you to re-evaluate your position or your essay plan? To what extent do you agree or disagree with each source's claims? Considering these questions will help you to finalise your decisions about which sources to use in the essay. During this phase, you might also mark or collect passages that seem immediately relevant to your topic or essay plan. If you collect paraphrases or quotations in an electronic document or paper format, keep track of the author, year, page number or other pertinent information for each detail that you might include in your final product. For each source you want to use in the essay, decide the following:

- Which ideas you will quote or paraphrase in the essay
- Where you will quote or paraphrase those ideas (e.g., in which body paragraphs)

If you have kept a record of ideas you want to paraphrase or quote, you can add some notes to that document about why or how you intend to use each idea. This will give you a good start on preparing to write your rough draft.

Report Your Findings

During the essay-writing phase, you will support your ideas or lines of argument with the evidence you gathered and evaluated. Each time you paraphrase, quote or summarise an idea from another source, make sure that you include a citation to indicate where the information came from. Using in-text citations and other referencing requirements establishes academic integrity and credibility. The paper will need a bibliography page that lists the sources used in your research. Your assignment's referencing requirements will determine the correct format to use for in-text citations and bibliographic entries. The most common requirements are Harvard or APA, but you may also encounter MLA requirements.

Think About It

- What goals do you need to accomplish during the research process?
- Which of your search results are most relevant to those goals?
- Where in the essay will you paraphrase, summarise or quote outside sources?

Academic research may seem daunting at first, but through careful planning, you can find relevant and appropriate sources efficiently and successfully.

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Choosing Sources Wisely
Chapter 2, Section 2: Lesson 2

As you search for outside sources, regardless of where you look, you will have more choices than you can use in your draft. Therefore, you must choose your sources wisely. This often involves recognising

whether or not a source is 'academic', primary or secondary as well as some common criteria of appropriate sources.

Academic Versus Non-Academic Sources

Academic papers and writing projects require the most relevant and authoritative sources you can find, but how do you know what the best sources are? Some assignments will require you to use only 'academic' sources, which are considered more trustworthy and credible than non-academic sources. Some lecturers may permit the use of 'non-academic' sources when they are accurate and relevant. While a source such as a journal article is usually considered 'academic', for other types of sources, the distinction between 'academic' and 'non-academic' may vary by discipline, university or lecturer. The following types of sources are generally considered 'academic' or 'non-academic'. Refer to your lecturer for specific guidelines about what sources are 'academic' or appropriate.

Academic Sources

- **Peer-reviewed journal articles** are published in scholarly journals that focus on a specific discipline of study. In order for an article to be published in a peer-reviewed journal, the article must undergo a rigorous review process by experts in the field. These sources are generally considered the gold standard. You can find peer-reviewed journal articles by using an academic database and narrowing your search results to 'peer-reviewed'.
- **Books published by a university press or other academic publisher** usually undergo a similar process of peer review, so they are also usually considered 'academic'.
- **Government reports** usually appear on government websites but may also be accessed via academic databases. They are often acceptable for academic assignments because the researchers and writers have been vetted, and in most cases, the information has undergone some type of review process.
- **Other sources in which the authors are affiliated with a university or research institute** can provide useful and credible information.

Non-Academic Sources

- **Newspaper or news magazine articles** may contain information that is relevant to your topic, but check with your lecturer when in doubt. You may find these sources through either an academic database or a general online search.
- **Non-profit and political-action websites** contain information provided by a group with the purpose of spreading awareness about a social issue or promoting a political position. The information on these sites may lack objectivity, but these sites may also lead you to peer-reviewed sources if they list outside references.
- **Social media and blogs** are generally not appropriate sources for academic writing unless your purpose is to report on social media behaviour or popular opinion.

These are only a few of the many types of sources you may encounter when conducting research, but using an academic database can be an effective way to ensure that you choose appropriate sources.

Primary Versus Secondary Sources

For some writing assignments it may be necessary to differentiate between primary and secondary sources. Both primary sources and secondary sources can be useful for a given research topic. Depending on your assignment, the topic you're researching and the requirements of your lecturer, you might use only primary sources, only secondary sources or a mix of both. Your lecturer is the best source of clarification about which sources are primary versus secondary for the given topic and purpose. To some extent, the characteristics of a primary and a secondary source depend on the academic discipline or unit of study for which they are used.

Primary Versus Secondary Sources in the Sciences

In the sciences or fields such as health and medicine, psychology and education, a primary source is usually a document (such as an article, report or book) that describes an original study or experiment conducted by the author(s). The researcher(s) who conducted the study are also the author(s) of the document. Primary sources in these contexts include information about the researchers' hypotheses, methods, results and conclusions. A common secondary source in the sciences (as well as other disciplines) is a free-standing literature review in which the author's purpose is to summarise the

state-of-the-art research about a given topic. In that situation, the author is the second source of information about other people's research.

Primary and secondary sources can both be useful when writing essays for the sciences or social sciences (e.g., psychology, education or nursing). For example, suppose you are writing an education paper about best practices in classroom management. A research study that found positive outcomes of one practice is a primary source, and it would show a reader that using that practice is based on scientific research. The same essay might also reference experts who have evaluated other researchers' work or theories, and those types of secondary sources can bolster an argument, too. The distinction is useful because you should probably avoid using other authors' literature reviews as your source of information about a particular study. You can read literature reviews to get ideas for possible sources to read and use, but when you find original research studies summarised in literature reviews, it's better to access the original study, read it and then reference it in your essay.

Primary Versus Secondary Sources in Literary or Historical Essays

In these contexts, a primary source is a document, object, communication or other material from the time period or issue that is being studied. If you conduct a literary study, then the primary source is the piece of literature that you are researching or analysing. A secondary source for a literary writing topic would be an analysis of that literary work that has been written by a literary expert. In articles or essays about historical topics, primary sources include historical documents as well as physical objects or artefacts. Secondary sources are historians who are writing about the event but who did not necessarily bear witness to it. For example, if you were researching the Iraq War, first-hand reports from Iraq by citizens and soldiers would be primary sources, while articles about the war from historians or other writers would likely be secondary sources.

In historical and literary assignments, the requirements for using primary or secondary sources may vary. If you are writing a literary analysis that does not require outside sources besides the literary work you are analysing, then you are only required to use a primary source. If you are supposed to support your analysis with details from other literary critics, then you are using both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the literary work, and the secondary sources are other literary critics. Using secondary sources in this situation shows that your analysis of the text can be supported by experts, which enhances your own credibility.

Common Criteria for Evaluating Sources

Whether your sources are academic or non-academic, primary or secondary, you can use the following criteria to choose appropriate sources.

Relevance

Think about whether you actually need the information. Don't use a source simply to lengthen your bibliography or essay. Every source should be both important to and necessary for your paper. One technique that can help you generate relevant search results is by using your essay plan to develop search phrases. For example, if you have some ideas for possible points to cover or body paragraph topics for your first draft, you might use key words from your essay plan in your search phrases.

Author

How is the author of the source identified? What connection does he or she have to the material? For example, does the author have a degree in the field in which he or she is writing? How extensively has he or she published in this area? If the source is not academic, what personal or professional connections does the author have to the topic? Look for the author's biography or credentials in the source itself, or search for the author's name online.

Credibility

Credibility deals with whether the source is believable or trustworthy. What stated or unstated political, corporate, social or ethical goals does the author carry? Separate from the author, what institution is hosting, publishing or promoting the source and why? How might these factors, motivations and goals affect the source's credibility? How trustworthy is the author? Do there appear to be obvious or ambiguous omissions or even errors?

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Publication Date
Books, journal articles and government reports often indicate a publication date. In electronic sources, the publication date can be confused with other dates, such as dates regarding the last time a website was updated. Use the date that is most relevant to the topic you're considering. If a book lists multiple dates on its copyright page, the most recent date is usually the publication date for that edition. Note that undated sources aren't necessarily worthless. Limited edition publications, primary sources and historical material might be undated but still very valuable based on other criteria, such as author or relevance, especially if the date or time period can be guessed. Think twice about using undated sources with other warning signs, though. Such sources might include undated personal websites containing general information; anonymous, undated blog comments; and undated social media posts that can't be traced to a specific user or person.

Audience
Evaluating the audience is a matter of considering for whom the source, information or item was published, photographed, written or compiled. Who did the author, creator or publisher hope would read or access this material? What is the author's agenda or bias? For example, is the author hoping to influence a specific demographic, person, organisation or group of people? Is the author explicitly or implicitly advocating for a specific change of some kind, whether social, economic or political? The same questions can be asked of the publisher, not just the author.

Length
Length is an important factor for any source, but it's not a defining one. An academic journal article can provide detailed information about a topic. The amount and type of information your assignments require will help you determine which sources to use.

Think About It

- What types of sources are most appropriate for your topic and purpose?
- Where will you find these sources?
- How will you know whether your sources are credible?

Choosing sources wisely requires that you understand the type of source and that you think about its credibility based on at least some of the criteria discussed above.

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Reading Critically to Gather Information
Chapter 2, Section 2: Lesson 3

Just as people write for various purposes, they also read for various purposes: entertainment, information, understanding and more. When reading for fun, you simply let the story or book take you into its world and enjoy it for the time you're there. However, when reading potential sources for an academic writing assignment, you filter the information and make judgements about its validity or significance. Reading for enjoyment is important, but so is reading critically.

Critical Reading: A Definition and Rationale

Reading critically means moving from simply 'taking in' what you read to 'talking back' to what you read and, ultimately, 'taking a stand' on the issues you read about and find important. Critical reading refers to the process of making judgements and filtering material in effective, useful ways. Critical reading means you're aware that what you read is the result of one person's (or group's) view of the subject, and that person or group made choices about what he or she said and how he or she said it.

Critical reading also means going through the steps necessary to make an informed judgement:

- Understand what the writer is saying.
- Ask good questions of the text, recognising what the writer is doing and saying.

- Decide what you think about the text.

Step 1: Understand What the Writer is Saying
To make any judgement about what you're reading, you must first be sure you know what the author is saying. Understanding what someone else says not only makes it possible to form a good judgement about it but also allows you to build readers' belief in what you say.

More than likely, you're already familiar with reading-for-information since it's the kind of reading often required by textbooks and courses in the natural and social sciences, history and so on; it's also the kind of reading you do often every day, such as following instructions or reading about news events. You may not ask *why* very often in these circumstances; you simply take in information. Thus, the first step in critical reading is asking *who*, *what, when* and *where* before asking *why* and *how*. These strategies will help decipher what you read:

Skim the Text
While skimming, pay attention to the following aspects:

- The language level: if the writing is difficult to read, have a dictionary handy.
- The overall organisation and headings: they indicate what's covered in each section.
- The introduction and conclusion: they are most often where main points are summarised.

Mark Relevant Passages
In a print document, a pencil is useful to mark significant statements, point out where the writer is changing topics or note meanings of difficult words. If you're reading in an electronic format, use the 'notes' or 'highlight' feature to mark page numbers, passages, lines or words that stand out. You might even record relevant quotations or ideas on paper or in an electronic document, and if you do so, make sure that you also keep records of the author, page numbers or other source details you may need for your in-text citations and reference-page entries later.

Skim Again
When you go back through the document, notice where information was unclear or complex, paying attention to the overall organisation and main points. Then, make any additional notes that strike you as you skim a second time. Reread parts that may have been confusing the first time; since a writer often re-explains points later in the text, you may understand something that was initially unclear once you see what else the writer has to say.

Step 2: Make Smart Choices
Not everything in print is true or presents the whole story. From your own experience, you may note that writing is a process loaded with choices: what to say, what not to say, how to say it, how not to say it, to whom to say it and for what purpose. All of these choices influence what you read; the more aware you are of the writer's choices, the better you will read and analyse the text.

Reading
Besides preparing to understand the text you read, you can also ask some questions to help clarify the motives and possible biases of the writer(s).

- Look for information about the writer. Often there will a biographical note that can give you clues to the writer's expertise and attitudes. When was the text written? What was going on in the world? What triggered the writer to write this text? Who was the intended reader?
- When you skim the introduction and conclusion, write down the writer's main point and any major points that support that point. As you read, ask yourself if the writer is supporting that point well or if he or she is leaving out some important information.
- Write down some initial thoughts you have about the topic of the text: What do you already know? What is your initial position on the topic? What do you need to know?
- Note the points with which you agree/disagree throughout: What points are weak? Which are strong? What evidence allows you to believe what the writer says? What is your emotional reaction to the writing?

Analysis
In addition to simply noting what you think or what you observe, ask questions about why you understand the text as you do or why the writer chose to write it in a particular way. Consider questions such as the following.

- What is the writer's purpose, stated or unstated?
- How does the writer identify the sources, and are they strong?
- What larger political, social or economic circumstances may have influenced the writer?
- How does that experience or outlook affect your agreement or disagreement with the author?
- What information has the writer failed to fully explain, or what has the writer left out about important issues?
- Why does the author's perspective seem persuasive (or not)?

These steps will take you from being simply a spectator to a participant in the reading, which will give you more control over how a text affects you and will let you 'talk back' to the author. You will take an active role in the conversations of your profession and society. Then, you can move on to the next step, deciding what you think, and either write or talk about it.

Step 3: Decide What You Think
After determining what the writer is saying, and after reading and analysing the material, you can decide what you think. Which authors do you agree with and why? Whom do you disagree with and why? At this stage, you get to draw conclusions and discuss them. What material from the text led to your conclusions? In essence, you will 'take a stand' about what each writer is saying and why. You might express your stance in writing, in a speech or in casual conversation.

Think About It

- Who wrote the text you're reading, and what may have influenced the writing?
- What are the author's main points, and how well are they supported throughout the text?
- What stance should you take to enter into the conversation about your topic?

Reading critically means understanding a text, making judgements about what's being said and deciding what you think; in other words, talking back as a means of entering the conversation—through either a written or spoken format—in a confident, informed way.

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Academic Integrity
Chapter 2, Section 2: Lesson 4

The writing that you submit for university assignments and other professional contexts should demonstrate academic integrity. This is a quality of academic writing that involves knowing when and how to use outside sources as well as how to avoid plagiarism.

Knowing when to use outside sources is important because your essay will likely combine common knowledge and your own ideas with outside evidence. *Knowing how* to use outside sources is necessary so you can identify your sources in a recognisable way, allowing readers to do more reading into the topic and allowing you to integrate research in an organised way. *Knowing how to avoid plagiarism* will strengthen your own confidence in your writing and research abilities and avoid the possibility of academic discipline.

When to Use Outside Sources

Most university assignments will require you to use outside sources. While some of the ideas in your writing may be common knowledge or your own opinion, you will probably also need to substantiate

your ideas with evidence from experts. Your use of outside sources should be purposeful rather than arbitrary.

Common Knowledge
You might want to use outside sources if you need to illustrate your discussion with information that is not common knowledge. Common knowledge is information that's generally widely known—the sky is blue, car accidents happen from time to time, some people get married and many people go to work each day. You can assume that you and your readers share this common knowledge. As such, it isn't necessary to reference common knowledge, either with in-text citations or bibliographic entries.

Specific Information
However, in some essays, you might need to use specific information that isn't common knowledge: What physical or scientific process makes the sky appear blue? How often do car accidents happen, and are they worse in specific cities, or were they worse in specific decades? What cultures or religions emphasize marriage, and are there any cultures in which people do not get married? What is the current unemployment rate, and what industries are adding jobs? Finding out this information requires that you research to locate sources; getting the information to readers requires you to cite and reference your sources.

Necessity
It's important to know that the use of outside sources is a means toward an end. Writers use outside sources to illustrate an issue, support an argument, provide context, make an evaluation and so on. If you use outside sources, these sources should be necessary to illustrate your discussion. Sources shouldn't be used to pad a discussion or meet a minimum word-length requirement.

How to Use Outside Sources

There are three important ways in which you can bring outside sources into your paper: through summary, paraphrase and direct quotation. The guidelines for creating in-text citations in Harvard and APA are included in the appendix. You can also find information about MLA style in the *Smarthinking Writer's Handbook* (US Edition).

Summary
A summary is a brief statement that relays an idea from a source. For example, you might need to summarise the two or three key findings of an original research study. A summary doesn't present every detail from the original source; rather, it presents only the key idea(s). If you summarise a key finding, idea, conclusion, theory or opinion from a source, you should include an in-text citation so that your reader can accurately identify which source included that idea. For any in-text citation, you also need a corresponding reference-page entry for each source that you cite.

Paraphrase
Paraphrases involve more detail than summaries. Whereas a summary involves highlighting the key idea(s) from an outside source, a paraphrase usually offers the same amount of detail as the original source offered. When paraphrasing, you should present one or more pieces of detailed information from an outside source but do so in your own words. For example, you might need to paraphrase a passage from a study that discusses detailed quantitative findings. Of course, when you paraphrase, you will include an in-text citation and a corresponding reference-page entry.

Direct Quotation
If a source has phrased a piece of information in a particularly effective, fresh or appealing way, you might want to quote that source in your essay. The length of your quote will depend on the nature of the section you want to quote and how it relates to your own discussion. If the quote is a single sentence, part of a sentence or a lengthy passage, you must include the direct wording from the original as well as quotation marks around that wording. Just like summary and paraphrase, you need to include an in-text citation to let your reader know where that quotation comes from. Note that when quoting longer passages, some style guides require that you specially indent the quotation rather than using quotation marks to demarcate it; this is usually called a block quotation. As with any in-text citation, you also need a corresponding reference-page entry for each source that you cite in text.

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Avoiding Plagiarism

Many times, you can avoid plagiarism by double-checking for errors in the references or citations of a source. Many good, honest writers unintentionally plagiarise simply because they don't double check their citations.

Intentional Plagiarism

A writer might intentionally plagiarise by copying sentences or paragraphs from another source and pasting them into his or her own piece of writing with the intention of presenting these sentences or paragraphs as his or her own words. Or a writer might intentionally plagiarise by rewriting another's essay and presenting its ideas as his or her own. Intentionally presenting another writer's words or ideas as your own constitutes plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty, and it often carries heavy consequences such as failure of the assignment, failure of the class and even permanent expulsion from the school.

Accidental Plagiarism

Accidents and errors in referencing, while not necessarily academically dishonest, are still a serious academic issue. For example, you might open your writing up to charges of plagiarism if you paraphrase information, such as an idea, figure or statistic, and forget to include the citation. In cases like these, your reader will have trouble differentiating the source's ideas and wording from your own. While such errors are not necessarily intentional, they do affect the credibility of your writing because you aren't attributing ideas and wording to outside sources in a correct and consistent way. If readers can't trust one part of your essay, how do they know they can trust other parts?

Avoiding intentional plagiarism is easy: you should never wish to present another's writing or ideas as your own. Avoiding accidents and errors is more difficult but no less important. Proofread your essay carefully from a printed copy to ensure that your writing includes the necessary citations and quotation marks. Watch carefully for key facts that need accompanying citations.

Think About It

- When is it necessary to incorporate outside sources into your writing?
- Where should you summarise, paraphrase or quote from your sources?
- Which referencing errors need to be polished to avoid accidental plagiarism?

Demonstrating academic integrity requires that you consider why you want to use research, how you want to use research and how you can avoid plagiarism.

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Referencing
Chapter 2, Section 2: Lesson 5

Any time you write an academic or professional paper and use information from another source, you must give credit to that particular source. The information you use can include quotations, summaries, paraphrases and any fact that isn't common knowledge, including charts, pictures and graphics from websites; therefore, any of these types of information must be clearly referenced. Referencing involves two main steps: (1) using in-text citations in sentences that paraphrase, summarise or quote and (2) including a reference-page entry for each source on a page of references at the end of the document. By giving credit to the source, you provide readers with enough information that they can find the source if they want to.

What You Need to Reference

Anytime you use information that isn't your own original idea, you need an in-text citation. For each source that you cite in the text of your paper, you will also need to include a reference-page entry. Typically, you will need to cite ideas, direct quotations and paraphrases, all from outside works.

Ideas
Suppose you are reading an article as you gather information for a research paper and happen upon a great idea. Although you don't necessarily want to use a direct quotation from the article, you do really like the idea. Even if you only use an idea that belongs to another author, you must include an in-text citation and a reference-page entry. Using someone else's idea without referencing that source is considered plagiarism.

Direct Quotations
Any time you use an author's exact words, you need to let your reader know that those words belong to someone else. You should do that by putting the other person's words inside quotation marks. You will also need to include an in-text citation.

Paraphrases
When you take an author's words and put them into your own words, it's called *paraphrasing*. As is true with referring to an idea that belongs to someone else, when you paraphrase, you need to cite and reference the original source. In other words, you will want to let your reader know where you're getting the information that you have paraphrased.

Why You Need to Reference
Referencing is important for a number of reasons, including the following:

Show People Where Your Information Originated
Your readers might want to know more about your topic. If you use accurate in-text citations and correct reference-page entries, a reader can go to your sources to get even more information about a subject that you refer to in an essay. In this way, in-text citations and reference-page entries serve as a road map for people who want to do additional research—beyond what you present in your writing project.

Avoid Plagiarism
Without in-text citations and reference-page entries in an essay that involved research, you run the risk of being accused of plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs any time a writer presents ideas and words as his or her own when they were composed by someone else. Researched writing is about bringing ideas and information together in one place. However, if you don't make it clear that some information came from sources beyond your own experience and knowledge, then you are misrepresenting the original author. Most schools have strict consequences for plagiarism. If you plagiarise, it's likely you will lose your credibility.

Give Your Essay or Writing Project Authority
When you refer to credible sources, you give your text weight. If you refer to experts in the field about which you are writing, readers will be more likely to take your work seriously.

Styles of Referencing
Writers use different styles of referencing for different academic disciplines. You will most likely use Harvard referencing or APA style, but some courses in the humanities may require MLA style. You should use the style chosen by your lecturer regardless of what discipline or field you're working in for your course or essay.

Think About It
- What ideas and/or information from outside sources did you include in your essay?
- Where are quotation marks needed to show readers the original author's exact words?
- What style does your lecturer require for citations and references?

Proper citation and referencing will help show your readers where you retrieved your information and give you integrity as a writer.

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Chapter 3: Drafting Your Essay

Effective Introductions
Chapter 3: Lesson 1

Have you ever walked into a party and spotted a group of friends talking and laughing? You join the group and say, 'Why is everyone laughing?' Their laughter got you interested; their answer gives you background or context to appreciate the joke. Readers want this same information at the start of a paper to decide whether to read the full essay. Sometimes writers struggle because they think the audience is the lecturer and the context is the assignment itself; when writers expand their audience, most members won't have the full context. The reality, then, is that papers need complete introductions to make the entire essay effective for all potential audience members.

Writing and Revising

When to write the introduction and when to revise it are important questions for you to consider as a writer. Some tips will help you make these decisions.

Write the Introduction Last

Many people write effective introductions after the paper is finished. Why? Well, the easy answer is that the body of the paper is where you get to express and develop your ideas about the topic. The body is usually easier to write than the introduction because you probably have a pretty good idea what you want to say there. Sometimes drafting the body is similar to a brainstorming session in which you explore ideas. Once you finish the body, you go back and complete the first draft by adding the introduction.

Write the Introduction First

Some writers need to start at the beginning, which is also an acceptable strategy. The advantage of writing the paper this way is that you have a better idea of where you're headed before you begin the body. Either way works just fine—what really matters is that the introduction is effective.

Revising With Each Change in Content

Introduction revision is often overlooked because writers don't recognize that introductions may need to change when the essay content changes. Consider this scenario: Your original introduction addresses the importance of limiting screen time for young children. In your second draft, you revise your body paragraphs, and the body now contains a discussion of the importance of limiting screen time for adolescents as well. Which is easier to revise to make the two consistent: the introduction or the body paragraphs?

Strategies for Writing Effective Introductions

First, remember that if you're bored by what you're writing, your audience likely will be as well. The other points to keep in mind are that readers need to know why you chose this topic (context), and they want to know general information about the topic (background) to understand your controlling/main idea (sometimes referred to as a thesis statement). This doesn't mean you only talk about the assignment; it means you help your audience understand the topic *from your perspective*. Here are some ideas to begin an effective introduction:

Inverted Pyramid

Begin with a general statement about your topic and then gradually become more specific, as seen in the opening sentences of this introduction:

- *Virginia Woolf is often discussed in terms of her mental illness because she committed suicide. What people need to discuss about her, however, are her literary works, especially* A Room of One's Own*. This book discussed feminism before it was an acceptable, societal term.*

The first sentence is a general statement meant to intrigue the reader. The sentences that follow become more specific and continue to increase in specificity until the final, most specific sentence, the thesis statement (not included here).

Rhetorical Questions
A rhetorical question can be used to open the introduction and interest the reader as long as it's relevant to the paper's topic:

- *Does a four-year university degree still carry the same weight today as it did thirty years ago? Many experts answer no. Choosing whether or not to go to university is a difficult decision because it seems impossible to gauge the value of education versus the value of work experience.*

This rhetorical question effectively leads to the topic because the question and topic are related. Again, the paragraph will continue to develop until you reach the thesis statement, which expresses the main idea.

These methods will help you get started on creating an effective introduction regardless of whether you choose to write it first or after finishing the first draft of the paper's body. Either way, your entire essay will be stronger if there is a solid introduction.

Thesis Statement
Typically, an introduction will include a clear statement regarding the main idea of the essay. Many refer to this as a thesis statement. This statement can appear anywhere within the introduction, but it typically works most effectively at the beginning or end of the introduction. It may range in length from one sentence to several sentences. Sometimes lecturers will ask that the thesis statement be placed in its own section, under the heading of *Aim* or *Purpose.* Check with your assignment description and/or lecturer for any specific requirements regarding the placement of the thesis statement.

A thesis statement should indicate the main idea of your paper. Its goal is to provide a sense of focus and scope for your writing by helping your readers understand your essay's main purpose and how you will achieve that purpose. Your thesis statement should directly connect with your assignment requirements. For instance, if your assignment asks you to compare two cultures, your thesis statement should reflect that you will be comparing and contrasting two cultures and, if applicable, for what purpose you are doing so, as in the following example:

- *The similarities and differences in the cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples reveal fundamental beliefs that impact their willingness to participate in various healthcare initiatives, providing a basis on which to build effective outreach programs.*

Note, your thesis statement should also consider any special requirements your lecturer has provided. You may also find that you need to revisit your thesis statement after drafting your essay in full to ensure that it aligns with both your assignment requirements and the points you make within the body of your essay.

What Creates Ineffective Introductions
Quite simply, ineffective introductions don't do some or all of the work described above. Three of the most common errors that writers make include the following:

Direct Assignment Statements With No Background/Context
If you assume that your lecturer is the audience and the assignment is your context, you're likely to open your draft with a sentence like this: *My paper explains why counsellors must use a variety of listening strategies to assist their clients.* Many papers open this way and then move directly to a discussion of why this statement is true. This method isn't effective because no one understands the paper's purpose or the background or context for the topic.

Generic Questions/Dictionary Definitions
Rhetorical questions are effective strategies, but general questions or dictionary definitions are not. General questions are something like this: *What is university? What is an education?* Dictionary definitions start like this: *The dictionary defines 'education' as . . .* Both of these openings are ineffective because they're overused and clichéd and neither will lead to strong background or context.

Broad Generalisations
These are all-encompassing statements that have little to no meaning. They may begin like this: *Since the beginning of time* . . . These types of statements tell your audience that you don't really know what you want to write because the topic is so broad that you simply can't address it in an essay (or even a book!).

Think About It

- What did you do to interest your reader?
- What did you do to show your audience how you're approaching your topic and what to expect in the rest of the essay?
- If you were your reader, what more might you need to know to prepare for the rest of the essay?

Effective introductions get your reader's interest and prepare them for writing to come.

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Powerful Body Paragraphs
Chapter 3: Lesson 2

Whether or not you've ever built a house of cards, you can picture what happens when a card from the middle is pulled out: everything collapses. That's what happens when you don't have powerful paragraphs to support your essay. They're the backbone of a strong paper. Your body paragraphs develop your main idea and support the purpose of the paper. Body paragraphs generally consist of three parts:

- Topic sentences
- Supporting details
- Analysis and/or explanation

Topic Sentences

For the purposes of this lesson, the term 'topic sentence' will refer to the opening sentence of a body paragraph. A topic sentence has two key goals: to create essay unity by connecting to the controlling/main idea of the essay and to promote paragraph unity by indicating what idea will be developed within the paragraph.

How Topic Sentences Enhance Essay Unity
To unify the essay, each body paragraph in your paper should have a clear relationship to the main idea. One way to make this happen is to start each paragraph with a strong topic sentence that clearly shows the connection between the paragraph and your main idea. Here is an example of the topic sentences for an essay about the effects of smartphones on adolescents' social habits. Each topic sentence would begin a separate body paragraph in the draft.

- *One significant impact of smartphones is that social gatherings have become less common among adolescents because they are content to socialise remotely.*
- *Smartphones have also increased the frequency of adolescents' peer-to-peer communications.*

Each topic sentence refers to the paper's main idea (the impact of smartphones on adolescents' social habits). The reference is a bit more subtle in the second topic sentence ('have also increased'), but the connection between the body paragraph topics and the main idea is clear.

How Topic Sentences Enhance Paragraph Unity
Paragraph unity happens when each sentence within the paragraph supports and develops the idea in the topic sentence. When you follow this strategy, you will discuss only a single idea within each

paragraph. Writing a topic sentence for each body paragraph helps you to stay focused on a single topic while you are developing the rest of the paragraph. For example, after the topic sentence about the decrease in social gatherings, every sentence would discuss how often teens gather socially (or perhaps how often adolescents gathered before smartphones versus now). No other effects would be discussed in that paragraph so that it's unified. After writing a paragraph, check for unity by asking what each sentence says about the topic sentence. If the answer isn't clear, consider whether the sentence belongs within that particular paragraph. It may need to be moved or even deleted.

Remember, too, that the strength of a topic sentence can vary. For instance, *Walking is another good way to get exercise* is a decent topic sentence; however, it could still be improved with more specific details about what the paragraph describes: e.g., *Power walking while holding light hand weights is another good way to get aerobic and strength-building exercise at the same time.* The more closely your topic sentence aligns with your body paragraph and connects with your main idea, the stronger it will be. Note, too, that transitional wording and phrases, like 'another way' in topic sentences also promotes essay unity because it shows the connection between the body paragraph topics.

Supporting Details

Each body paragraph requires support to help readers see that you're making reasonable, valid points. A paragraph that looks too thin may create the impression that there isn't much evidence to support the point you want to make. This means that you may need several or more supporting details, which might include examples of real-life situations or events, evidence from scholars or experts, or statistics. The types of supporting details that are most appropriate will vary by topic and academic discipline. For example, to develop the topic sentence, *One significant impact of smartphones is that social gatherings have become less common among adolescents because they are content to socialise remotely,* one might include the following types of supporting details.

- Psychological or sociological studies about the frequency of social gatherings during the 1980s or 1990s
- Descriptions of the types of social gatherings that were common before smartphones
- Qualitative or quantitative data about the frequency of social gatherings now (e.g. via adolescent surveys or research studies)

You may need a few sentences to fully describe each piece of evidence. Each time you mention ideas from outside sources, make sure that you reference them according to your assignment's referencing requirements.

Analysis/Explanation

In addition to supporting details, you will want to include your own analysis of what those details mean or some explanation of how that evidence supports your main idea. You can do this throughout the paragraph with an analysis for every paraphrase or quotation, or you might save your analysis until after you describe the evidence. For the example topic about smartphones, each body paragraph would explain the significance of each effect or possibly even the positive or negative implications. For example, a writer could explain why gathering in groups is more valuable or developmentally appropriate than texting from the confines of a bedroom. The analysis or explanations that you provide also enhance the essay unity because they elaborate on how the supporting details are connected to the main idea.

Think About It

- What single topic unifies each paragraph?
- What should you add or omit to properly support the topic sentence in each paragraph?
- Where should you expand paragraphs with supporting details or analysis?

Well-developed body paragraphs are important tools for any essay. When unified, the paragraphs are powerful—they form a strong essay your readers will enjoy and understand.

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Strong Conclusions
Chapter 3: Lesson 3

Envision this: Your friend walks up and starts to tell you a joke. Right before she tells you the punchline, she walks away. It's not that she didn't know the punchline; she just didn't give you closure. Just as you are frustrated with your friend, readers are frustrated with papers that don't close. Conclusions provide closure and are your chance to leave your audience with strong, lasting impressions.

What Strong Conclusions Contain

Conclusions complement the introduction but aren't just a repetition of the same information found there. What conclusions need to do is reinforce the ideas you have developed in the paper's body. Once you have done that, give your readers closure by helping them understand the importance or implications of those points. Strong conclusions should have the following traits.

Echo the Introduction

Papers need to come full circle, and one way to do that effectively is to *echo* some of the information you wrote in the introduction. *Echo* is an important term because you should not write your conclusion simply by *repeating the words* from your introduction. Readers will find it more useful if you restate, rather than repeat, important introductory material and your main idea so that they can see how your topic has developed from beginning to end.

Reinforce Main Points

Readers expect conclusions to 'look back' and show the ground covered in the essay. Think about the main points you want to reiterate to readers and include them in the conclusion. Don't repeat ideas word-for-word, though. Restate them so readers see how all ideas come together to form a solid, final point.

Provide Closure and Larger Implications

Leave readers with an endnote that resonates well after they put down the paper. Often, leaving readers with a final, lasting impression means suggesting larger implications or showing how the controlling/main idea applies to the future. Basically, give readers something to think about once they walk away from the essay; that's what is meant by *closure*.

Strategies for Writing Strong Conclusions

Writing the conclusion is often difficult because you feel like you've already written everything that needs to be said. While a conclusion can feel repetitious, effective conclusions include all of the items listed above in such a way that readers appreciate the reinforcement of the ideas found throughout the rest of the essay. Below are three methods to help you get started on a strong conclusion:

Long-Term Applications

The long-term application of your ideas to real-world situations is another effective way to begin the conclusion. You need to be sure the long-term application you provide relates to your topic:

- *The feminist ideologies Virginia Woolf presents in* A Room of One's Own *resonate today because women still are not given equal pay for equal work. The book is a guide for correcting this inequity for women now and in the future.*

The opening sentence for a conclusion shows how the book is still applicable today. An echo of one of the paper's points follows it. You would continue with these types of echoes to reinforce why this is a valid and important conclusion based upon the evidence presented in the paper. A strong closing sentence for this model might be a restatement of your thesis statement.

Pyramid

This strategy opens with a specific statement about your topic, followed with other general statements (related to your topic, of course!) that bring closure to the essay. Because the most specific statement in the introduction is your main idea or thesis statement, one way to begin the conclusion is to echo it in the first sentence:

Pearson

- *Individuals may believe that holistic medicine has no place in contemporary science and medicine; however, the curative and restorative properties of holistic medicine show promise. Increasingly, holistic medicine is becoming a part of or the entirety of treatment plans for various illnesses, both acute and chronic.*

The echoed thesis statement that opens this conclusion is followed by a more general sentence that reiterates one of the supporting points in your essay. You continue reiterating your points in this way until you provide a closing statement, which in this instance might be a general, long-term application of your main idea: *Remaining open to the possibilities of holistic medicine will allow patients to pursue safer, more natural remedies and will reduce the mutation of bacteria, leading to a healthier future for all.*

These three methods are just a few examples to help you start your conclusion when you're stuck. The important thing to remember is that your readers need you to finish the essay with a strong conclusion to understand the significance of the rest of your paper.

What Creates Weak Conclusions

There are many reasons for weak conclusions. Try to avoid the three most common problems for weak conclusions.

Repetition of Introduction/Thesis Statement

Often, student writers take the advice to echo or reiterate information from the introduction and thesis statement too literally and rewrite that information word-for-word or with only small changes. Readers are frustrated when this happens, and their first thought is to question the importance of the material between the introduction and conclusion. The two paragraphs should not be the same; the conclusion should instead build on the ideas expressed in the introduction.

New Ideas/Information

Although you can discuss larger implications in the conclusion, you should resist the temptation to use your conclusion as the 'last chance' to throw in new ideas or information. Remember, larger implications or long-term applications must be based on ideas you've already developed in the body of the essay.

Announcement/No Closure

Sometimes student writers will end with one or two sentences like this: *In conclusion, my paper proves that professional courtesy requires the use of thank-you notes.* First, it's not always necessary to announce you're concluding by saying *In conclusion* because it should be obvious that you're ending your paper. Second, when you don't reiterate your main points, you place the burden of remembering everything important about the essay on the reader. When this happens, you lose credibility with your audience, and readers may dismiss all the ideas in your paper.

Think About It

- What did you do to be certain introductory information was not repeated word-for-word?
- What main points from the essay did you reiterate?
- If you provided a long-term application or a larger implication, in what way does it relate to your main idea?

Strong conclusions bring the essay to a close and leave readers with a complete understanding of your topic.

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Smooth Transitions
Chapter 3: Lesson 4

The doctor is very experienced. The former hospital counsellor relocated. Wait, what? What's the connection between these two statements? Without a smooth transition, readers have no way of knowing the relationship between the ideas, so they can't understand the point. Transitions help readers see the connection between your paragraphs as well as within them. Regardless of where or how you make transitions, their use is very important for creating paragraph unity and paper coherence.

Sentences as Transitions

Using complete sentences as transitions is very powerful and will make an essay stronger. This type of transition can be used in two different ways:

Transition Between Paragraphs
Moving from one paragraph to another can be tricky because, by definition, each paragraph should present a new idea. Showing readers how paragraphs relate can often be accomplished by connecting the topic of the previous paragraph in the next paragraph's topic sentence. For instance, say that a body paragraph about the effects of second-hand smoke on children discusses asthma in one body paragraph; then, the next body paragraph discusses respiratory infections. The topic sentence of the paragraph on respiratory infections might look like this:

- *In addition to higher rates of asthma, children exposed to second-hand smoke experience higher rates of respiratory infections.* (The transitional phrase 'in addition to higher rates of asthma' shows how the previous effect, the topic of the previous paragraph, is connected to the next effect, the topic of the next paragraph.)

Transitions like this one allow readers to move smoothly from one paragraph to another, creating essay coherence.

Transition Between Sentences
Often, you can use this same type of transition to connect two seemingly unrelated or contradictory sentences. Consider the two statements about the doctor and the counsellor; a sentence can help transition from one to the other:

- *The doctor is very experienced. Based on her record, the hospital offered her a position as a hospital administrator, and her first decision in that role was to hire on a counsellor because the hospital lacked one. The former hospital counsellor relocated.*

By adding the second sentence, the first two sentences now make sense because you can see that the doctor's experience connects with the former counsellor's relocation. Now the two ideas are unified.

Keywords, Phrases and Parallel Structure as Transitions

Frequently, writers use keywords or phrases from the thesis statement, the statement that indicates the paper's purpose or main idea, and topic sentences to transition between body paragraphs and between sentences within each paragraph. Another effective method of transitioning that is similar is the use of parallel sentence structure.

Words or Phrases From the Thesis Statement
The use of keywords or phrases from your thesis statement can be an effective transitional tool:

- *The use of 1:1 laptop initiatives has positively impacted several aspects of writing instruction and assessment for adolescent learners.* ***[Thesis statement.]***
- *One way in which laptops positively impact student learning is by providing access to multi-media presentations that are inherently more engaging to adolescents than non-digital instructional formats.* ***[Topic sentence.]***

Readers immediately make the connection between this paragraph and the paper's controlling/main idea because the key words *laptops, positively* and *impact* are repeated, giving the essay more coherence.

Words/Phrases From Topic Sentences
Just as you use words and phrases from the thesis statement to transition, you can do the same with words and phrases that appear in topic sentences:

- *The administration of the hospital faces many challenges. Some of these challenges include understaffing and underfunding.*

The word *challenges* from the first sentence, or topic sentence, are repeated in the second sentence to connect the ideas between the two statements, helping readers see their relationship.

Parallel Structure
You create these transitions when you write sentences that are structured the same:

- *The administration of the hospital faces many challenges. The community surrounding the hospital offers several solutions.*

Readers can quickly connect the ideas in these two sentences because the sentences are structured the same: article (*the*), subject (*administration of the hospital* and *community surrounding the hospital*), verb (*faces* and *offers*), adjective (*many* and *several)* and object (*challenges* and *solutions*). The matching structure helps readers see the connection between two seemingly different ideas, making the writing flow smoothly.

Transitional Words/Phrases

Finally, here are some familiar transitions! These words and phrases help readers solidify a relationship between your ideas. The following is a quick list of some of the most common with the relationship they create:

- **Addition:** *and, also, in addition, furthermore*
- **Example:** *for example, for instance, specifically*
- **Compare:** *also, likewise, similarly*
- **Contrast:** *however, on the other hand, yet, although*
- **Summarise:** *therefore, in other words*
- **Time:** *after, before, during, next, finally, meanwhile, immediately*
- **Place/Direction:** *above, below, nearby, close, far, left, right*
- **Logical Relationships:** *therefore, consequently, as a result, thus, since, because*

Using these words at the beginning of and/or between sentences will help you move smoothly from one idea to the next by showing readers the relationship between ideas.

Implied Transitions and Problems With Transition Overuse

Often, paragraphs and sentences don't require a transition because the transition is implied:

- *The clinic administrator had his work cut out for him. The clinic was understaffed and underfunded, the neighbourhood was dangerous, and, most troubling of all, the current staff was not properly educated in medicine and counselling.*

There is no need for a transition because the second sentence clearly explains why the clinic administrator had challenges ahead of him. If you put a transition here, the unity of the paragraph is interrupted, and the paper loses its flow.
Each of the methods of transitioning in this lesson can be very effective, but *each must be used sparingly* so you don't disrupt the natural flow of the paper. When you use transitions, remember to vary them to keep the paper interesting!

Think About It

- What connection do you make between paragraphs to give the paper coherence?
- What connection should you include between sentences to create paragraph unity?
- Where can you eliminate unnecessary transitions because the transition is implied?

Transitions, when used wisely, make a stronger, more unified and coherent paper.

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Chapter 4: Revising and Editing Your Essay

Moving From the Rough to Presentation Draft
Chapter 4: Lesson 1

If you can answer these questions, you already know what it means to revise. You know what it means to reshape the stories you tell to suit your audiences and to polish your presentations with repetition. You know how new meanings emerge each time you recount something that happened to you or talk about a subject you're knowledgeable about.

What It Means to Revise an Essay

Revising a paper or project simply means to 're-see' it—to take another look at it and write another draft. When you re-experience a favourite book or movie, you find something new each time. Similarly, each time you revise a piece of writing, you find new ideas to develop and new areas to improve. Writing multiple drafts leads to stronger papers.

Notes Draft

A notes draft consists of your brainstorming and notes. It may take the form of a list of body paragraph topics, an idea-cluster or a ten-minute freewrite. This is your first attempt at seeing—and writing or typing—what you want to say.

Rough Draft

From the notes draft, you move to your rough draft. As you revise from notes to the rough draft, concentrate on the overall meaning of the essay. Look through your notes draft to see whether there are any points that look like a main idea and/or thesis statement. Now, what points in that draft could be used to support the main idea—or what points might you need to add?

Once you organise the thesis statement with supporting points in a logical order, consider any further details each supporting point may need. Add detail and add logical transitions from one point to the next.

Revised Draft

Once you've written your rough draft, give yourself a break. Ideally, set the draft aside for a day. When you come back, read through your rough draft slowly, pretending it's someone else's work. Make notes in the margins of a hard copy or embed comments in the text on a computer file. For the revised draft, focus most intently on your ideas. See the list below ('What to Focus on in Revision') for specific guidelines. When you're finished looking at the bigger ideas, you can begin to correct wordy or unclear sentences and grammatical errors.

When your revised draft is finished, you're ready to get readers' responses. Bring or send the revised draft to your lecturer and/or to your peer-review group.

Presentation Draft

For this draft, review the comments from readers to consider what they say about the 'big' issues: the

paper's main idea, the supporting points and the examples. As you review readers' comments, ask yourself the following questions:

- What reasons do the readers give for their suggestions?
- What does a given reader seem to expect your paper to do?
- What do you expect to change based on a reader's response?
- What common concerns come up more than once in your readers' comments?

The answers should reveal how to use readers' comments to further revise. The draft could still change substantially at this stage, and comments can get you thinking about your topic in a new way. When you have made all the changes from your own thinking and from readers' comments, you have arrived at the presentation draft—the one ready to submit.

What to Focus on in Revision

- **Revise to fulfil the assignment:** What has your assignment asked you to do? The task your lecturer has set will have a large influence on your revision process and your presentation draft. What changes must you make to better fulfil the assignment?
- **Revise to clarify your purpose**: Why are you writing the paper (other than the mere fact that you were assigned to do so)? What do you want your reader to take away from your writing?
- **Revise to address your audience:** How does your paper make clear who its intended readers are? What moves does it make to reach those readers? What changes might you need to make to come across to your readers as a trustworthy voice on the topic?
- **Revise to clarify your main idea:** Which sentence(s) state(s) your main idea? If you can't find it, then clarifying your main idea or thesis statement is your first task. (Hint: The thesis statement might be at the end of the first draft; sometimes you have to develop an idea before you can realise what you really want to say!)
- **Revise to make your main idea more specific and to highlight your critical thinking on the task at hand:** If your main idea is something so self-evident that no one could argue with it, how could you revise it to be more specific and forceful? What is your stance on your topic?
- **Revise to connect your body paragraphs more closely to your main idea:** Write out the sentences that express the main points or highlight your topic sentences in each paragraph. How does each one support your main idea?
- **Revise to add more support for your main points:** What evidence do you have for each body paragraph? Evidence includes your own detailed examples as well as findings from other researchers.
- **Revise for more coherence:** Since relationships between your body paragraphs should be clear and logical, consider whether the reader can easily see how you get from one point to the next. Which transitions or signposts should be clearer, both within and between your paragraphs?
- **Revise for a more effective opening and closing:** How does your introduction engage the reader? How does it establish (1) your topic and (2) your purpose in writing about that topic? In addition, how does your conclusion summarise your main points? What 'food for thought' does it offer the reader?
- **Revise for tone and diction:** What attitude does the paper convey? What image of the writer do you get from it—serious or playful, academic or informal? To what extent does the tone you have chosen sound right for your audience? What about diction (word choice)? Have you chosen words at the right level of formality for your paper's purpose? Remember, for an academic or professional audience, you will most likely need a formal tone.

Revising Versus Proofreading

The kind of work discussed above is called *revising,* which means to engage in depth with the essay's content. Revising should not be confused with editing or proofreading, which means checking each sentence for grammar and spelling errors. You should do that only at the very end of the multi-draft process.

Think About It

- What are ways that revision can improve your paper even when the first draft is strong?
- What changes need to be made between the notes draft to the rough draft?
- What should you revise after considering readers' comments?

Writing is most rewarding when you allow your piece to grow over the course of more than one draft. As you develop your own multi-draft process, you will see for yourself how revision, rather than being a separate stage in the writing process, is really an integral part of that process from start to finish.

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Lesson 2: Revising Content
Chapter 4: Lesson 2

The terms *revising* and *editing* are often used interchangeably among student writers, usually with a feeling of great dread. Once a draft is written, when the burden of the assignment feels lifted, and you long to turn it in and be done with it, do you consider re-reading it and looking for errors? While the need to quickly finish an assignment and turn it in can feel overpowering, taking some time after completing a draft to revise your work and make substantive changes will lead to a much stronger piece of writing.

Revising Versus Editing

Editing and revising are actually very different activities, and both are significant parts of the writing process for any essay. The act of *editing* or *proofreading* can be a simple one in which you correct typographical or grammatical errors so the writing is clean and clear, perhaps simplifying wordy sentences or making them clearer. This is the final step of the writing process and should be completed when the paper is nearing its final form.

Revising, on the other hand, is a much more involved process that gives you the chance to 're-see' the essay, perhaps after taking a break to get some distance from the material. When you revise your work, you frequently make substantive changes such as reordering paragraphs, deleting chunks of the paper and even rewriting portions from scratch.

Writing in Steps

One thing all writers need to realise is that they can't do everything at once, at least successfully; the brain can only keep track of so many tasks at the same time. Because writing is such a complex activity, some of your thoughts and plans go by the wayside while you focus on other things. Once you recognize and accept this fact, you can gain better control over what you write because you know to focus on only a few thoughts at any one time.

Each writer approaches the writing process differently, but most begin by engaging in prewriting exercises to generate ideas. Then, they create an outline to organise those ideas before composing a first draft of the essay. At each stage, the writer is focused on a different aspect of the work, whether that be generating ideas, placing those ideas in the right order or plugging those ideas into paragraphs. Once ideas are plugged in, the revision process can start. This is the stage when you review a paragraph or essay as a whole and ask yourself some fundamental questions to be sure the essay fits the assignment and provides the right information in the best way to the intended audience.

The more drafts you work through, the stronger and more focused the material can become. Therefore, revision isn't necessarily a one-time event in the writing process; it may happen multiple times over various drafts. Revision won't immediately lead to 'perfect' papers, but there always needs to be a time when the essay is deemed complete. Continuing to practise the revision process will ensure a stronger paper next time, and it gets easier with practice.

Revising an Introductory Paragraph

First Draft

An example will show how revision can improve a paragraph of text. In this example, the writer has just completed a first draft of an introductory paragraph for an essay on understanding the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

The Value of the Australian Dietary Guidelines

> *Food awareness is an essential part of good health. Dietary guidelines are essential to maintaining a healthy weight and encouraging an active lifestyle. The Australian Dietary Guidelines are meant to provide valuable food knowledge to the general population, thereby developing healthy habits among all peoples in Australia. The general population needs to understand the food they consume on a daily basis to ensure they are able to lead healthy, active lives and to reduce the possibility of diet-related chronic illnesses.*

Revising the Paragraph

When you revise your work, you're not just correcting errors or deleting words, but you're looking for places where more information is required, where a better example might fit or where chunks of text need to be removed, moved or changed. Consider what this might look like for the above draft paragraph:

The Value of the Australian Dietary Guidelines

> *Food awareness is an essential part of good health.* **[< Add a stronger attention grabber and either remove this sentence or integrate it into another.]** *Dietary guidelines are essential to maintaining a healthy weight and encouraging an active lifestyle.* **[< Maybe delete this sentence--it sounds redundant.]** *The Australian Dietary Guidelines are meant to provide valuable food knowledge to the general population, thereby developing healthy habits among all peoples in Australia.* **[< Provide a stronger definition/explanation of the ADG and introduce the initialism.]** *The general population needs to understand the food they consume on a daily basis to ensure they are able to lead healthy, active lives and to reduce the possibility of diet-related chronic illnesses.*

In this paragraph, the writer has highlighted sentences to delete and inserted notes as a guide for how to revise the paragraph. This strategy can help you to remember what to move and add so that you can read the entire work and then come back to make the changes.

Second Draft

Here's how the introductory paragraph might look after the revisions are complete:

The Value of the Australian Dietary Guidelines

> *What, exactly, is a healthy food? What foods are acceptable in small amounts, and what should be avoided altogether? Many Australians ask these questions everyday as they attempt to establish good eating habits. Food knowledge is an essential part of good health, but many Australians lack the necessary knowledge to develop healthy habits. The Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG) are basic dietary guidelines meant to help the average Australian maintain a healthy weight and live an active, fulfilling life by learning about food and developing healthy eating and food preparation and storage habits. The general population needs to understand the food they consume to ensure they are able to maintain physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing and to reduce the possibility of diet-related chronic illnesses.*

The paragraph is now improving significantly with content removed and added to create a stronger opening that grabs readers' attention and interest and begins to convince them that the Australian Dietary Guidelines are an important topic worth discussing.

Think About It

- How could your draft better express your message or argument to your readers?
- What parts of the draft might be confusing for readers?
- What content or evidence is missing that would make your point stronger?

- Where might you have too much information that is distracting readers from your main point?

By considering these questions and allowing others to read your work and provide you with honest feedback, you will be better prepared to improve your essay and will become a stronger and more effective writer overall.

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Lesson 3: Editing and Proofreading
Chapter 4: Lesson 3

Editing. Proofreading. What are they exactly—and what's the difference? Some people use the terms interchangeably, but the two actions differ in their focus. Editing focuses on making sentences and phrases more understandable and accessible while proofreading focuses on searching for typos, missing words, misspellings and other small errors. Editing and proofreading are separate but equally important parts of the writing process; both help you improve the clarity and presentation of your writing.

Common Editing and Clarity Issues

The following are common editing and clarity issues many writers have. You may recognize some of these from your own past writing—most writers do.

Passive Voice

One common clarity issue is overusing the passive voice. Occasionally, you may need to use passive voice, which consists of a *to be* verb (*is, am, was*, *are*, *will, be,* etc.) and the past participle of a main verb. This form often isn't necessary, however, and since it can be wordy, avoid it when possible. Whenever you can, use active verbs alone to paint the picture for your readers. Compare these two sentences as an example:

- ***With a passive verb:*** *A strong foundational knowledge* ***is needed*** *to succeed in this unit of study.*
- ***With an active verb:*** *A student* ***needs*** *a strong foundation of knowledge to succeed in this unit of study.*

Relying on *To Be* Verbs

Using various forms of *to be* can make your writing less active. Although *to be* by itself isn't passive, it doesn't have the same action or energy as most other verbs, so look for other options when possible. You might need to be creative! For example:

- ***To be verb: The mother*** *is supportive.*
- ***Active verb: The mother*** *encourages her.*
- ***To be verb****: She* **will be** *more successful with a strong support system.*
- ***Active verb****: She* **will triumph** *with a strong support system.*

Padded Sentences

A 'padded' sentence is the written equivalent of talking a lot but not saying much. Here's an example:

- *As one continues on with the reading of the novel, due to the fact that the author may be using some symbolism, one could or could not begin to notice that the main character's house at least somewhat symbolises the world in which we live.*

This sentence is confusing and convoluted, possibly because the writer isn't sure what to say about the novel's symbolism. If the writer avoids padding the sentence, it might read like this:

- *In the novel, the main character's house symbolises the world.*

You will often see 'hedge words' and phrases as padding, too:

- **Padded:** *I think that this author is encouraging readers to perform a nightly rain dance.*
- **Revised:** *This author is encouraging readers to perform a nightly rain dance.*

Big or Fancy Words
Writers sometimes believe using fancier or more complex words will make their writing more academic or formal, but this usually isn't the case: Readers are more interested in discussion than vocabulary. You can write *The students conversed with their lecturer*, but it's more effective to write, *The students talked to their lecturer*. Whenever a simple word will work, use the simple word. It's often the more effective choice!

Common Proofreading Issues

The following are common proofreading issues that all writers—even professionals—watch for as they work toward their final drafts.

Missing Words
Many times, ideas flow quickly when you're composing a first draft. During that phase, it's easy to leave out a word, such as in this sentence:

- *The students realised lecturer appreciated talking to them.*

The sentence is missing the word *the* between *realised* and *lecturer.* Since *the* is a short word and doesn't affect the sentence's main idea, readers often automatically insert the word as they skim the sentence, even if the word isn't actually there.

Errors a Spellchecker Won't Catch
Many people have seen the poem that explains how a spellchecker works, which includes the following play on words: 'To rite with care is quite a feet / Of witch won should bee proud'. Since a spellchecker only marks misspelled words, it won't mark misused words, such as *rite* instead of *write* or *witch* instead of *which*. *Rite* and *witch* are both spelled correctly, even though the words are incorrectly used in the poem.

Some common errors that spell checkers miss or mistake are homophones errors (like the ones in the poem above), unusual proper nouns (like uncommon names) and typographical errors that result in a known word (like typing 'wok' instead of 'work'). Similarly, grammar checkers can mistake long, grammatically correct sentences as ungrammatical simply because of their length or may mistake subject-verb agreement errors because words appear between the subject and verb. Because the computer's checker tools are not foolproof and they are limited by the information in their algorithms, it's a good idea to use them supportively but to rely on your own knowledge and a thorough, careful proofreading before submitting your presentation draft.

Personal Patterns of Grammatical Error
Even seasoned writers have certain writing hang-ups. Some writers have trouble with fragments while others overuse commas. Knowing your personal patterns of error will help you learn which issues you need to focus on more closely as you proofread.

Strategies for Editing and Proofreading

Try the following strategies, noting which option(s) work(s) most effectively and efficiently for your writing process. Most writers follow this order when proofreading, saving the last few strategies as a last resort. You might want to experiment with using multiple strategies since every writer—and every writing assignment—is different!

Have a Friend Read Your Work Aloud While You Follow Along With a Printed Copy
This technique is a valuable way to hear how the work sounds to a reader who may not be familiar with the material or your writing style. Mark places where your friend has trouble smoothly reading sentences so that you know where to revise for clarity. As you listen to your friend and read along, you're also more likely to notice proofreading errors.

Read the Paper in Reverse Order
Print out a copy of your essay and grab a blank sheet of paper for this exercise. Cover everything but the last sentence of your essay with the blank sheet of paper; then, read just the last sentence of your paper. Note any errors or confusing phrases you want to revise. Move the blank paper up so the second-to-last sentence is visible and read that sentence. Reading in reverse order takes the sentences out of context, so it's easier to spot editing or proofreading errors. If you don't have access to a printer or don't wish to print your paper out, highlighting the text as you read can be effective, too!

Keep a Dictionary Handy
Refer to the dictionary—or a dictionary app—whenever you need to double-check the meaning or usage of a word. Having the dictionary nearby, either in book form or online, allows you to access it as you're editing.

Revisit the Work Later
Coming back to your essay after 24 hours—or 24 minutes—can be a great way to gain a fresh perspective. Writers are more likely to notice typos or awkward sentences after taking a break from the writing process.

Proofread a Printed Version
Reading a printed version allows you to mark errors as you read. Try placing a ruler under each line to maintain focus on only a single line or sentence. This approach also gives you a 'new' perspective since the computer screen is removed.

Highlight or Darken the Text Background on a Computer Screen
When proofreading on a computer screen, highlight each sentence or darken the sentence's background as you read. Use the Text Highlighter tool in your word-processing program to change the colour of the document's background for a single sentence. Changing the background helps maintain focus on just that single sentence.

Keep an Error Log
An error log, or a record of the types of errors you make most often, will help you to improve your proofreading. You can use and record feedback from your lecturers, peers, tutors and yourself to identify your personal patterns of error so you can devote more attention to those patterns during the editing and proofreading stages. Over time, your list can and will change as you learn how to recognize and correct errors. This list should primarily focus on punctuation, usage and spelling errors, rather than issues related to development, structure or other assignment-specific information. The following is an example of an error log that you can use to help you create your own:

Sentence With a Mistake	Description of the Problem and Solution	Corrected Sentence	What to Look for
Joes shoes got dirty.	The first word is missing an apostrophe to show possession; add an -*'s* to indicate the shoes belong to Joe.	*Joe's shoes got dirty.*	-s that shows possession
The dogs runs fast on the track after the cat.	*Dogs* (subject) is plural; *runs* (verb) is singular. Plural subject goes with plural verb; singular subject goes with singular verb.	*The dogs run fast on the track after the cat.* **OR** *The dog runs fast on the track after the cat.*	mismatched subject and verb

An error log can contain as many rows as you need to help you learn to identify and proofread your writing. With your error log on hand, you will have something to reference when you are drafting your next essay, and you will be more aware of the errors you need to watch out for.

Read the Work Aloud
Reading the essay aloud may help you focus on each sentence so that you can hear awkward phrasing

or other issues. Since you are reading aloud, you will also read more slowly, which may help you catch proofreading errors. If you're in a situation that does not allow you to read aloud, consider moving your cursor along with your eyes as you read silently. This strategy won't let you hear how your work sounds aloud, but it will help you to maintain focus as you read.

Think About It

- Which elements should you focus on during the editing stage?
- Which elements need attention during proofreading?
- Which writing issue(s) should you regularly check for?
- Which editing and proofreading techniques benefit you most?

Editing and proofreading helps you to polish your writing assignments to improve your clarity and presentation. Every reader appreciates clear, error-free writing!

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Chapter 5: Grammar and Mechanics
Section 1: Parts of Speech

Nouns
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 1

Children often grow up reciting that a noun is a person, place or thing, but it's not as simple as that. Whatever exists, whether in our minds or in the observable world, must be named before it can be spoken or written about. When we name something—a person, place, material thing or idea—it is most often a noun.

Singular and Plural Nouns

A noun is singular if it names one thing: *car, idea, blizzard.* Most nouns are made plural by the addition of *-s:*

- *car/cars*
- *idea/ideas*
- *blizzard/blizzards*

If a noun ends in *-x, -ss, -ch, -tch,* or *-sh*, it requires an *-es* ending in order to be pronounceable:

- *box/boxes*
- *mattress/mattresses*
- *rich/riches*
- *watch/watches*
- *eyelash/eyelashes*

Some nouns are pluralised differently. Nouns ending in an *-f* sound may change the *-f* to a *-v* when pluralised:

- *knife/knives*
- *calf/calves*
- *leaf/leaves*
- *life/lives*

A singular noun ending in *-y* preceded by a consonant will change the *-y* to *-ie* before adding *-s*:

- *harmony/harmonies*
- *family/families*

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Other nouns are pluralised in unpredictable ways:

- *child/children*
- *deer/deer*
- *person/people*

If you're not sure how to pluralise a noun, any good dictionary will let you know if the plural form is irregular.

Sometimes a noun contains many things—*family, team, platoon.* These are called *collective nouns*, and in British English, they are almost always plural.

Some nouns are not countable and cannot be made plural. Noncount (or mass) nouns, like *weather* and *milk*, are not pluralised. While dust is made up of millions of particles, *dust* itself is a noncount noun.

Proper Nouns and Common Nouns

A proper noun names a specific person, place or thing. These include geographical locations (Amazon River, Melbourne), names of individuals (Fred, Harriet, Snoopy), specific times (Monday, September, Christmas), languages (English, Sanskrit), departments (the Modern Languages Department), organisations (the United Nations), religions (Russian Orthodox) and titles (*Middlemarch,* 'Moonlight in Vermont'). Proper nouns are capitalised. If a noun doesn't denote a specific person, place or thing, it's a common noun.

Using Nouns

Like pronouns, nouns can be used as subjects and objects, or they can form possessives. That is, a noun can be the subject of a clause:

- *The **chart** described the patient's medical history*.

Or a noun can be the object of a verb or preposition:

- *The nurse checked the **chart**.*
- *In the **chart**, the nurse discovered that the patient had asthma*.

When a noun is used as subject or object, its format does not change. When it's used possessively, however, a singular noun needs an apostrophe and the letter *-s*:

- *The **chart's** medical history lacked clarity, however* (i.e., the medical history *of* the chart).

A regular plural noun becomes plural first and then adds an apostrophe after the *-s:*

- *The **charts'** information was incomplete because the new patients had not been seen.*

Noun Phrases and Clauses

A clause may function as a noun, as in this famous sentence:

- *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal*, *that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights*, *that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*

The three 'that-clauses' function as nouns, listing those self-evident truths.

A phrase—a group of words that hang together—can also function as a noun. In the following sentence, for example, both the subject and the predicate nominative are noun phrases: '*Preparing for a disaster is acting in a proactive fashion'.*

Preparing and *acting* are gerunds—verbs which have been made into nouns. A noun clause or phrase is one that stands for one concept, activity or circumstance.

Nouns Made from Other Words

Certain word endings act to build nouns from other nouns, verbs and adjectives. Here are just a few:

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- *-tion* and *-sion* make nouns out of verbs: *organisation* (from *organise*); *emission* (from *emit*)
- *-ment* also makes nouns out of verbs: *government* (from *govern*), *argument* (from *argue*)
- *-ist, -er, -or* make a 'one who does something' out of the 'something' word: *trombonist* (from *trombone*), *performer* (from *perform*), *actor* (from *act*)
- Other noun-endings include *–acy* (*privacy*), *-ity* (*audacity*), *-dom* (*freedom*), *-ism* (*capitalism*), *-ence (eminence)* or *–ance* (*maintenance*)

Think About It

- What endings do your nouns need to become plural or possessive?
- Which clauses or phrases stand for a concept, activity or circumstance and are, therefore, nouns?
- What word endings could you use to build nouns from words already present in your writing?

If you're having trouble identifying the noun or nouns in a given sentence, look at how words function in that sentence. Once you've found the nouns, you can check how well they're doing their jobs: Remember that they can be singular or plural, possessive, subject or object, proper or common. Nouns need quite a bit of attention!

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Personal Pronouns
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 2

Pronouns are words which stand for nouns (including noun phrases and clauses) whose identity is given earlier in the sentence or paragraph. Personal pronouns stand for people and things. They include words like *I, you, he, she* and *it,* as well as *them, mine, who* and *whoever.* Personal pronouns take cases, which helps these seemingly simple words serve different roles in your writing.

Pronoun Antecedents

Personal pronouns must agree with their antecedents (the nouns they stand for) in both number and gender. When using a pronoun, then, make sure you understand what its antecedent is to help you choose the plural or singular form, or—for the third person singular—the male, female or neuter form (*he, she, it*). Identifying the antecedent is sometimes tricky, as these examples show:

- *The specialist, the nurse and the primary care physician shared their concerns with one another.* Here, the plural pronoun *their* refers to a plural subject (the three caregivers).
- *The specialist, the nurse and the primary care physician each had his own approach to the patient's care plan.* Here, the singular pronouns *his* refers to the singular nouns *the specialist, the nurse* and *the primary care physician*, which are functioning independently from one another.

In addition, pronouns are the only English parts of speech that have *cases.*

Personal Pronoun Cases

Pronoun cases confuse everybody. You may polish an essay so that its sentences shine but then get marked down for a sentence like *The presentation described the differing opinions of Henry, Samantha and I* because you should have said, *me*, not *I*. But how are you supposed to know that?

Pronoun cases are the different forms personal pronouns take as they serve different roles within a sentence. Pronouns are the only parts of speech in English that have cases: ***nominative, objective*** and ***possessive.*** Once you get used to that idea, choosing the correct form of the pronoun becomes easier. Here are the details of each case:

- Use the ***nominative*** case when the pronoun is acting as the subject of a clause (***He*** *needs help*. ***Who*** *is coming?*) or as a predicate nominative after a linking verb (*The doctor is* ***she!***).

The nominative pronouns are *I, we, he, she, they, who* and *whoever.* (The pronouns *you* and *it* and *which* and *that* are the same in both nominative and objective.)

- The ***objective*** case is used when the pronoun is acting as the object of a verb (*She encouraged **him***) or acting as the object of a preposition (*He discussed options with **her**; she didn't care with **whom** she spoke*) or the subject of an infinitive phrase (*Dr Daniels didn't want **her** to misunderstand her options*). Objective pronouns are *me, us, him, her, them, whom, myself, ourselves, himself, herself* and *whomever.*

- ***Possessive*** pronouns indicate possession or ownership (*She expressed **her** concerns*. ***My** expectations are as follows. That product is **theirs***. ***Whose** decision is this*?). Possessive pronouns include *my, mine, our, ours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs* and *whose.*

Often, when you understand how the sentence is put together, you will know that a pronoun is incorrect simply because it doesn't sound right. Since most of the confusion is between nominative and objective cases, let's focus on those.

- Is a pronoun the subject of your sentence? Most of the time, your ear will tell you right away that *Me is sorry about your broken leg* is just wrong, as is *Him forgot his medication.* Trying to use the objective form of a pronoun (*me* or *him*) as the subject just sounds wrong.

- Is the pronoun one of multiple subjects? This is trickier. *Adam and me prepared a SWOT analysis* doesn't seem all that wrong. However, if you simply remove the other subject, you will probably pick up the fact that the case is wrong: *Me prepared a SWOT analysis*. *Me* can't be the subject; it should be *I*. So, if *me* is wrong for a single-subject sentence, it's just as wrong for a multiple-subject sentence. When you have multiple subjects (two or more) in your clause, remove all subjects but the pronoun. Then, you can choose the pronoun case that sounds right.

- Is the pronoun used to the right of the 'to be' verb in a sentence such as *The supervisor is* ______ or *Without a doubt, the individual who is new to counselling will be* ________? This is tricky, too, since *The supervisor is her* doesn't sound all that wrong. But if you switch the sentence around—and because it's a 'to be' sentence, you can do this—you get *Her is the supervisor*. And that's certainly wrong! In an X = Y type of sentence, where Y is a pronoun, switch the order to Y = X, and you will know which case to use

- Is the pronoun the sole object of a verb or preposition? Then pay attention to your own instincts. Would you ever say *I hope you come along with I*? Of course you wouldn't, any more than you would say *The hospice nurse showed we the facilities* Using the subject case where the objective case should be seems equally wrong.

- Is the pronoun one of the multiple objects of a verb or preposition? If so, perform the same experiment you just performed with multiple subjects. Remove all of the other objects; then you will know that, for instance, *Maintaining professional distance is essential for the counsellor, the client and I* is dead wrong because you would never say *Maintaining professional distance is essential for I.* When you've got multiple objects of a preposition or verb, remove all objects but the pronoun. Then select the pronoun case that sounds right.

- *Who* and *whom* provide a special challenge: Although they're always used as singular subjects or objects, our ear doesn't always help us choose the correct case, at least not in examples like *Who/whom did you show*? *Who* is wrong, but it doesn't 'sound' wrong. Still, you can help your ear if you (1) answer the question (i.e., put the question in the form of an answer) and (2) substitute the pronouns *he* (nominative) and *him* (objective) for *who* and *whom*: *Who/whom did you show*? Becomes *You showed who/whom* and then *You showed he/him*. Would you say *You showed he*? Of course not! You would use *him*. So *whom* should be used in *Whom did you show*?

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Think About It

- Which of your pronouns need revision based on their antecedents?
- Where can you polish your sentences to use personal pronoun cases correctly?
- What 'tests' will help you determine whether you're using objective and nominative pronouns correctly?

Always know what noun your pronoun stands for, and don't let pronoun cases intimidate you. Take charge of them, either by their cases, performing some simple tests or relying on your ear.

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Demonstrative, Relative, Reflexive and Indefinite Pronouns
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 3

Personal pronouns aren't the only pronouns. There are also demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, reflexive pronouns and indefinite pronouns. Understanding how these words function is key to using them effectively.

Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstratives are pointers. They're words that can act as pronouns or as determiners—adjectives that point to specific things. They include

- that
- this
- such
- these
- those

If you say *These medications are unmarked,* you're using *these* as an adjective, describing the medications. If you say *These are unmarked,* you're using *these* as a pronoun: The noun they refer to (medications) isn't present in the sentence, so if you're using the pronoun in written form, the medications must have been mentioned in the previous sentence. If you're using the pronoun in speech, you can simply point to the medications when you refer to them as *these.*

As with personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns must always have clear antecedents. Compare these two passages:

- *Some hospitals are relying more heavily on technology to ensure patient care. This means that hospital personnel must be well-versed in various software packages or comfortable adapting to new software.* Here, the antecedent of *this* is the entire previous sentence—the fact of hospitals relying on technology. It's perfectly clear what *this* is.

- *Common patient complaints include abdominal pains, headache, fever and rash. These may be signs of influenza.* Here, the antecedent of *these* is not clear. The writer probably means that the fever and headache are symptoms of influenza, but the reader cannot be sure.

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns select from *groups* of nouns or pronouns. They include the personal pronouns *who, whoever* and *whomever,* as well as *what, whatever, which, whichever* and *that.* (Note that only the personal pronouns have cases.) Relative pronouns ending in *ever* are called *indefinite relative pronouns* since their antecedents are not definite. *What* can also be an indefinite relative pronoun.

- ***Whoever*** *needs counselling should have access to those services.*

- *Society does not always consider **what** can happen if an individual who needs counselling cannot receive it*.

The relative pronouns *which* and *that* are often used as the subjects of relative clauses—clauses which act as adjectives, describing nouns or pronouns. Although these two relative pronouns are sometimes used interchangeably, they actually have distinct uses:

- *Which* is used when the relative clause is non-restrictive (also called nonessential). Nonrestrictive clauses are not, strictly speaking, necessary to the overall meaning of the sentence—they could be removed from the sentence without injuring its basic meaning.
- *That* is used when the relative clause is restrictive (i.e., essential). A restrictive relative clause is necessary to the overall meaning of the sentence.

Consider these examples:

- *The medications, which the patient needs at a certain time, have not been labelled appropriately.* Here, if you remove the non-restrictive clause, you get *The medications have not been labelled appropriately*. This information conveys the basic meaning of the original sentence—it's missing an interesting detail, but the detail isn't essential.
- *A pharmacy that provides unlabelled medications has made a serious error.* Here, if you remove the defining clause, you get *A pharmacy has made a serious error.* Obviously, the meaning of this sentence is quite different from that of the original. The clause conveys important information and is therefore essential.

Reflexive Pronouns

These are personal pronouns in the sense that they're formed by adding *self* or *selves* to the personal pronouns *my, your, him, her, it, our* and *them. Myself, yourself* (when *you* is singular), *himself, herself* and *itself* are all singular; *ourselves, yourselves* (when *you* is plural) and *themselves* are plural. You should use reflexive pronouns when the subject of the clause is both actor and acted-upon—both subject and object. The number of the reflexive pronoun must match the number of its pronoun.

- *We must prepare ourselves.*
- *The client considered himself a burden.*

You also use reflexive pronouns as intensifiers—to call the reader's attention to the identity of the noun or pronoun.

- *I myself have purchased products from the company many times.*
- *We ourselves are responsible for the current state of this community.*

Reflexive pronouns are never used by themselves: They must always be preceded in the sentence by the noun or pronoun for which they stand. (For example, in the previous sentence, *themselves* refers to *reflexive pronouns*.) *John, Frank and myself each explored a different specialisation* is incorrect because *myself* doesn't 'reflect' anything in the sentence. It should read *John, Frank and I each explored a different specialisation.*

Indefinite Pronouns

Finally, many pronouns have no antecedents at all, whether explicit or implicit. These are called indefinite pronouns. Essentially, these pronouns function as nouns: They stand for themselves, for people, things or groups whose identity isn't known. There are two categories of indefinite pronouns:

- Those whose antecedents are up for grabs. These include *anybody, anything, anyone, everybody, everything, everyone, somebody, something, someone, nobody, no one, none* and *nothing.*
- Those whose antecedents can be deduced in context. These may include *all, another, other, any, both, each, either, few, many, neither, one, some* and *several.*

The only difficulty presented by indefinite pronouns is determining whether the pronoun is singular or plural (because when the pronoun is the subject of a clause it must match its verb in number). The following are singular indefinite pronouns:

- any
- anyone
- anybody
- anything
- everybody
- everyone
- everything
- each
- nobody
- somebody
- Someone

Everybody, *everyone* and *everything* may seem plural, but they're not. The prefix *every* in these words means *each*, and *each* is always singular.

—and here are some plural indefinite pronouns:

- all
- many
- others
- none
- several
- Some

None can be singular or plural. If you say *None of the doctors has determined the cause, none* means *not one doctor*, and it's singular; if you say *None of the products were discontinued, none* means *not any*, and it's plural.

Think About It

- What (or whom) is your demonstrative pronoun pointing at?
- Which of your sentences need *that* for non-restrictive clauses and *which* for restrictive clauses?
- Where can reflexive pronouns help intensify the meaning you want to convey?
- What verbs should be revised based on whether your indefinite pronoun is plural or singular?

Knowing the different types of pronouns and when and how to use them brings flexibility to your writing. With demonstrative, relative, reflexive and indefinite pronouns, you will be able to polish pronoun usage and add details or emphasis in spots that might otherwise seem too simple.

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Verbs
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 4

In every sentence, something either happens or simply *is.* All clauses, whether dependent or independent, contain a subject and a predicate. The verb is the heart of the predicate: It denotes the action or state of being of a clause.

In any clause or full sentence, verbs do the majority of the work, and there is a great variety of work they might do. Verbs allow you to ask questions, make statements or give commands. They let you convey complex relationships between the subject and predicate, communicate about events and circumstances in the past, the present and the future and even indicate what happened in which order

within a sentence. (For instance, perfect tenses allow you to write a sentence like *I stepped in the classroom and found that my peers had not arrived,* conveying that your peers were not in the classroom your garden *before* you stepped in.) For these reasons—and more—you should understand the great variety of verb forms and their uses. The discussions below represent some of varieties of verbs and the forms they take, but some others that are discussed in this handbook include irregular verbs, helping verbs, active and passive voice and verb tenses.

Action Verbs

Verbs of action can be transitive or intransitive.

- Transitive verbs take direct objects.
    - *The client* ***sent*** *his requirements*. (*Requirements* is the direct object of the verb *sent*.)
    - *A successful outcome* ***requires*** *forethought*. (*Forethought* is the direct object of *requires*.)

- Intransitive verbs do not take direct objects.
    - *The client* ***called****.* (The verb *called* is intransitive, so it's complete without anything else; it doesn't need a direct object.)
    - *The worker* ***complained*** *that the conditions in the factory are subpar*. (The clause *that the conditions in the factory are subpar* is adverbial: It modifies the verb *complained* telling **why** the worker complained.)
    - *He* ***protested*** *the next day determined to change the working conditions*. (The phrase *determined to change the working conditions* is also adverbial: It modifies the verb *protested,* telling **how** she arose.)

Linking Verbs

Linking verbs convey states of being. The most commonly used verb of being is the verb *to be*:

- *The bank manager* ***was*** *determined to put security first*.
- *From now on, he* ***will be*** *focused on secure, online banking.*
- *He* ***is*** *the first manager to encourage stronger encryption.*

Still, there are many other 'being' or 'circumstance' verbs. Like *to be*, they link the subject to its complement—the part of the sentence that completes the thought. Some other linking verbs include the following:

- State of being verbs: *to become, to seem, to appear, to remain;* also (when used intransitively) *to grow, to turn, to prove.*
    - *When the child was asked about the accident, she* ***turned*** *sullen*.
    - *Encouraging interaction when a child becomes taciturn* ***proves*** *challenging.*
    - *She* ***has grown*** *quiet.*
    - *What* ***will become*** *of her?*

- Sensory verbs (when used intransitively): *to smell, to taste, to look, to feel, to sound.*
    - *Your bouillabaisse* ***smells*** *heavenly!*
    - *Still, it does not* ***taste*** *quite right.*
    - *In fact, some of your guests* ***look*** *ill.*
    - *The lady to my right just said she* ***feels*** *dizzy.*
    - *In fact, I thought your recipe* ***sounded*** *risky*.

Helping (Auxiliary) Verbs

Helping verbs are used with main verbs in order to convey sequences of time and overlays of mood. They include *will, shall, may, might, can, could, must, ought to, should, would, used to, need to,* as well as the verb *to do.* They're used with the base form of the main verb. For example,

- *He* ***will*** *remember this day forever*. *Will* helps the verb *to remember* form the future tense.
- ***Do*** *you remember your* PIN *for this bank? Do* helps the verb *to remember* form a question.

Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and another word or words, most often a preposition. The entire 'phrase' functions as a single verb because each phrase takes on a different meaning. *To blow up* means *to explode*, but *to blow*, all by itself, doesn't have this meaning. *To blow over* means to pass by, another meaning again. In the following examples—which are just a few of many English phrasal verbs—take note of how the phrase changes the meaning of the verb:

- *to give in*
- *to give away*
- *to give out*
- *to give back*
- *to hang on*
- *to hang up*
- *to turn up*
- *to turn down*
- *to turn off*
- *to turn out*

There are no 'rules' for the formation of phrasal verbs. A good dictionary will include definitions for phrasal verbs.

Conditional Verbs

Conditional verbs are used to make sentences about hypothetical or not-yet-actual acts and circumstances. Conditional sentences usually begin with *if*, but not all *if* sentences are conditional. Compare the following examples:

- *If anybody leaves food on the table, my basset hound is all over it.*
- *When Jack was a baby, if I turned my back for a minute, the basset always licked Jack's bowl.*

Both sentences are factual, not hypothetical, so the conditional isn't used; they just use the regular present and past tenses. If a sentence uses the future tense, it's necessarily conditional (since the future hasn't happened yet):

- *If she goes on a diet, she should make sure she still receives proper nutrition.*

Note that it's hypothetical, but also 'factual' in the sense that the sentence is making a claim about a future fact.

Conditional sentences get interesting—and tricky—when they deal with hypothetical situations. The hypothetical circumstance or action might happen, and it might not. It's outside the realm of factual.

Moods

Because speakers and writers have moods, verbs have moods: attitudes toward what is being conveyed in the sentence. There are four moods in English:

- **Indicative Mood:** The indicative mood is used to make a statement. Most sentences are statements: *Painting the walls blue creates a soothing atmosphere.*
- **Interrogative Mood:** The interrogative is used to ask a question: *What colour encourages creativity?*
- **Imperative Mood:** This mood is used to make commands. Since the (unspoken, unwritten) subject of a command is always **you**, the verb must be in the second person: *Nicholas, paint the walls red.*
- **Subjunctive Mood:** The subjunctive mood is used in dependent clauses to
  - express a wish: *I wish* ***my room had more windows*****.**
  - express a hypothetical: ***If there were more windows****, the room would have better airflow*.
  - express a request or demand: *I ask* ***that the work be done by the holidays***.

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In the past tense, the subjunctive uses exactly the same form as the indicative, with one exception: When using the verb *to be* in the subjunctive past tense, you must use *were*.

- *The client wished the project* ***ended*** *underbudget.*
- *If software* ***were*** *less expensive, the company could afford it*.

In the present tense, the subjunctive uses the base form of the verb.

- *I demand you* ***be*** *prepared for tomorrow's presentation.*
- *The pamphlet suggests we* ***request*** *an estimate.*

Think About It

- Which of your verbs need direct objects or other modifiers?
- Where will helping verbs complete your clauses?
- What phrasal verbs have just the right meaning for your sentences?
- Where will indicative, interrogative, imperative or subjunctive sentences add variety or style to your writing?

Verb formation is complicated, but for a good reason: In order to communicate clearly, you must be precise about time (tense) and distinguish between real and imagined circumstances. Learning how to use verbs precisely will strengthen your writing.

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Adjectives
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 5

If you think about it, you're asked to describe things all the time: What did you think of the movie? What was your childhood like? How would your dream house look? What is your most memorable experience? There's a good chance that adjectives are key words in your descriptions. An *adjective* is a word that describes or modifies a noun or a pronoun:

- *The movie was* ***terrible****.*
- *My childhood was* ***difficult*** *but shaped me into a* ***strong*** *person.*
- *My* ***dream*** *home would be a* ***Victorian*** *mansion on the shore of a* ***clear*** *lake.*
- *Hiking the* ***steep****,* ***snowy*** *trail of Mt. Kilimanjaro is my most* ***memorable*** *experience.*

Using Adjectives

An adjective can be used either after a linking verb or before the noun or pronoun it describes:

- *The movie was* ***terrible****.*
- *That was a* ***terrible*** *movie.*

Often, writers will combine multiple descriptions and create a compound adjective. In these cases, the compound adjective is hyphenated when it comes before the word it describes, but it isn't hyphenated when it comes after a linking verb:

- *The* ***bone-chilling*** *cold crept into the tent late that night.*
- *Late that night, the cold in the tent became* ***bone chilling****.*

As you can see, adjectives help you add extra information about your topic, showing readers how something looked or felt. You can identify adjectives in sentences by first finding the nouns or pronouns. Then you can ask whether other words are used to describe those nouns or pronouns

Adjective Clauses

While a clause is any group of words that has a subject and verb, an *adjective clause* is a clause that functions as an adjective—describing a noun or pronoun. Unlike regular adjectives, adjective clauses follow the word they refer to:

- *The actor, **who chose not to be in the sequel**, was happy about the movie's failure.*

The clause *who chose not to be in the sequel* functions as an adjective describing *actor*.

- *My childhood, **which I spent in a remote part of Vermont**, was difficult.*

The clause *which I spent in a remote part of Vermont* functions as an adjective describing *childhood*.

- *I saw the house **that I have always wanted**.*

Here, the clause *that I have always wanted* describes the noun *house*.

As you have noticed, adjective clauses are often introduced by particular pronouns, including *who, whom, whose, which* and *that.* You don't always need a pronoun, though. Your writing might sound a little less formal, but you can include adjective clauses in your sentences without the pronouns:

- *My childhood, **spent in a remote part of Vermont,** was difficult.*
- *I saw the house **I have always wanted**.*

Avoiding Repetition With Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses can increase the complexity of your sentences, but beware of several common mistakes. When using adjective clauses, don't repeat elements of your sentences as these examples do:

*The house **that** I grew up in **it** was white.*

That and *it* both refer to house, so *it* isn't needed.

*The movie I saw last weekend **it** was terrible.*

I saw last weekend is an adjective clause referring to *movie*, so the word *it* is not needed, as *it* also refers to *movie*.

Punctuating Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses can be essential or nonessential clauses, also called restrictive and non-restrictive clauses respectively. An essential clause is one that is needed to give necessary information about the noun it refers to, so it does *not* take commas. Here's an example:

*The man **who climbed Mt Kilimanjaro** complained about the horrible movie choices.*

The sentence *The man complained about the horrible movie choices* wouldn't be very clear because no one would know which man you meant. With the essential adjective clause *who climbed Mt Kilimanjaro,* readers can tell which man was complaining. Notice there are no commas setting the essential adjective clause apart from the rest of the sentence.

Nonessential clauses are different. They give information that may be interesting and useful, but they're not needed to convey the sentence's meaning. People will understand the sentence with or without a nonessential clause. These clauses are set off with commas, as in this example:

- *Fred, **who climbed Mt Kilimanjaro,** complained about the horrible movie choices.*

You can tell who the man is (Fred), so the adjective clause just gives extra information about him—it's not essential. The commas on each side set it apart. Think of them like brackets surrounding an interesting, but not essential, part of the sentence.

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Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers are words, phrases or clauses that modify (describe) another word. Adjectives, adjective phrases and adjective clauses are all modifiers, but watch out for misplaced modifiers, which create confusing, illogical sentences. Check this out:

- *The travellers saw a statue on the hill* ***made of granite****.*

Here, it's not clear whether the statue or the hill is made of granite. The meaning is clearer this way:

- *The travellers saw a statue* ***made of granite*** *on the hill.*

Here's another example:

- ***Showing marked improvements****, I helped Claude across the room.*

The adjective phrase (modifier) makes it sound like *I* am showing marked improvements rather than Claude. That's a misplaced modifier. It sounds clearer this way:

- *I helped Claude,* ***who was showing marked improvements****, across the room.*

The best place for a modifier is right next to the word it modifies. When the modifier is misplaced, confusion ensues:

- *Patricia wore her nicest dress to the interview,* ***which was a stunning blue gown****.*

Since an interview can't very well be a stunning blue gown, the dress must take that description. Make it clearer this way:

- *Patricia wore her nicest dress,* ***which was a stunning blue gown****, to the interview.*

Think About It

- What people, places, things and ideas in your essay could use more description?
- Where could you include adjective clauses to increase the complexity of your writing?
- Where do you need hyphens or commas to clarify your compound adjectives or adjective clauses?

Adjectives and adjective clauses add more detail to your writing while applying the conventions makes your meaning clearer.

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Adverbs
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 6

Adverbs have their own personalities. In fact, they can be quite the divas, especially in the way they demand commas from time to time. They will work for you on their terms, used only when the words they modify do not adequately express the meaning you want to convey. Like all parts of speech, an adverb may be a single word (*majestically*) or a string of words (*with utmost majesty*). Adverbs, adverb phrases and adverb clauses modify verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Regular Adverbs

An adverb is the part of speech which modifies (describes) a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Most adverbs are formed by adding *-ly* or *-ily* to an adjective (as in *happily, mightily, awfully, wildly,*

sceptically). Be careful, though. Not all modifiers ending in *-ly* are adverbs: Some *-ly* adjectives include *friendly, lively, lovely,* and *silly.*

Irregular Adverbs

Some adverbs do not end in *-ly*, including common words like *well* (the adverb form of the adjective *good*), *very* and *quite*. Many irregular adverbs also function as adjectives:

- *fast*
- *late*
- *straight*
- *hard*
- *low*
- *long*
- *far*

For example, in the phrase *straight line*, *straight* is an adjective describing the noun *line.* In *He ran straight into the wall*, *straight* is an adverb, describing the verb *ran.* If you're not sure what part of speech a word is (many words can function as more than one part of speech), any good dictionary will include that information in the listing for that word.

Functions of Adverbs of Manner

These types of adverbs answer the question *How?* and are usually used with action verbs.

- *Marcie smiles warmly, but Darcie smiles menacingly*. (The women are smiling in very different ways. The smiles are distinctive because different adverbs of manner are used to describe the action of smiling.)
- *Marcie drives* ***fast****, but Darcie drives* ***like a Supercars competitor***. (Remember that you can use a phrase or clause as a modifier, too. Both *fast* and *like a Supercars competitor* are adverbs of manner describing how the women drive.)

Adverbs of Place

These adverbs answer the question *Where?* and are usually used with verbs (whether of action or of being). Adverbs of place tend to be irregular:

- *You must park the car* ***here****.*
- *The client just stepped* ***outside****.*
- *I looked* ***everywhere*** *for her.*
- *She was pacing* ***all over the place***.

Adverbs of Time

Like adverbs of place, adverbs of time usually modify verbs and tend to be irregular. They answer the question *When?*

- *He needs to leave* ***now****.*
- *My guests arrived* ***early****.*
- ***Sometimes*** *I watch reality TV.*
- *At least one program is on* ***daily****.*
- *I record them* ***when I can't watch them live***.

Adverbs of Purpose

Use adverbs of purpose to answer the question *Why?* Answering *why* is much more complicated than answering *where*, *when* and *how*, so an adverb of purpose is always a phrase rather than a single word:

- *Hermione went to the store* ***to buy a produce***.
- ***To avoid her chatty neighbour****, she went out the back door.*

Intensifying Adverbs
These adverbs are also known as adverbs of degree. They indicate the degree or extent to which something happens and answer the question *How much?* They can modify verbs, adjectives and adverbs. There are three kinds of intensifying adverbs:

- Emphasising adverbs, as in *Hermione's neighbour **really** loves to gossip because she **simply** has little else to do*.
- Amplifying adverbs, as in *The neighbour **absolutely** refuses to engage in substantive conversation. She speaks **so well** but bores her company **completely***.
- Downsizing adverbs, as in *Hermione **sort of** dislikes her neighbour but **almost** always stops for a chat unless she's in a rush.*

Sometimes writers add an intensifying adverb because they aren't confident about other word choices or they're not ready to trust readers to pay close attention. Writers can helicopter like anxious parents over each sentence; they can't resist adding intensifiers just to make sure readers get the full meaning. Since adverbs modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs, you can avoid helicoptering if you choose those verbs, adjectives and other adverbs wisely. Compare these two sentences:

- *When he saw the extremely ugly spider, Herbert turned really pale and ran quickly away.*
- *When he saw the hideous spider, Herbert blanched and sprinted away.*

If you're satisfied with your choice of verb or modifier but still tempted to use an intensifier, stop and ask yourself if the added word changes the meaning of your sentence. Occasionally, it will. For instance, if you want to emphasize a contrast to be sure readers notice it, you might say

> *Sally believed Fred would find her attractive if she just lost ten pounds. **Actually,** Fred thought she was **perfectly** beautiful.*

Here the intensifiers add emphasis rather than mere verbiage: *Actually* transitions between sentences, and *perfectly* highlights Fred's opinion that Sally isn't just beautiful—she's perfect just as she is.

Still, most sentences don't benefit from the addition of intensifying adverbs. If *The brand-new homeowners adored their house*, your readers will assume that they did so *truly, really* and *absolutely*. If *They left their twelve-year-old twins alone in the house for the weekend*, writing that they did so *irresponsibly* will not increase reader outrage. What responsible parent would do this? Adverbs are powerful, and unnecessary adverbs can harm your writing as much as useful adverbs can help it.

Adverbs Include Phrases and Clauses

A prepositional phrase can be (and usually is) an adverb. For example, in *Her client loves to play the violin on rainy days,* the phrase *on rainy days* is an adverb, telling *when* her client loves to play the violin.

A clause can be an adverb. For instance, *When the rain pours down, it sounds like an accompaniment.* The clause 'when the rain pours down' is an adverb, telling *when* the rain sounds like an accompaniment.

Placement of Adverbs

Occasionally, adverbs get lost or misplaced within a sentence. Check out the different meanings created when the adverb *almost* is moved in these sentences:

- *I almost completed all of my units of study!*
- *I completed almost all of my units of study!*

In the first sentence, the student has yet to complete any units—but he's *almost completed* them. In the second sentence, he completed most of his units of study, but not all of them—just *almost all* of them. As with adjective modifiers, placing the adverb close to the word it's meant to describe makes your meaning clearer.

Pearson

Think About It

- Where do you need to describe *how*, *why*, *where* or *when* something is done?
- What adverbs do you need to add to modify a word?
- Which modifiers could you omit to avoid helicoptering?
- Which modifiers might be referring to the wrong word or in the wrong location within your sentence?

Depending on the question you need to answer—*how*, *where*, *when* or *why*—a properly placed adverb will emphasize ideas effectively. However, use them cautiously. Intensifying adverbs can get out of hand, so use only what's needed.

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Prepositions
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 7

If a friend asked you where his keys were, you might reply, 'You put your keys *in your pocket*' or 'I saw your keys *on your desk'.* In each sentence, the most detailed information about the missing keys' location is found in a prepositional phrase–*in your pocket* and *on your desk.* In fact, if you left these phrases out of your answers ('You put your keys'. 'I saw your keys'.), your friend would likely be confused and frustrated, not to mention locked out of his office, car or house for quite a while.

As this scenario demonstrates, prepositions (like *in* and *on*) and the prepositional phrases that they introduce help you create clear, descriptive statements. By including prepositional phrases in your writing, you can make your compositions engaging, share essential ideas with a target audience and keep your reader from having a confused reaction similar to that of your friend with the missing keys.

Prepositions

A *preposition* is a word that connects a noun or pronoun to another word to show their relationship in a sentence. In their simplest use, prepositions demonstrate relationships such as *place* (where something is), *time* (when something occurs) or *direction* (where something is going). Look, for instance, at the bolded words in the following statements:

- *The librarian needs the book* ***beside*** *the leather armchair.*
- *The exam* ***before*** *lunch will be the most difficult.*
- *The echidna is walking* ***toward*** *a rickety bridge.*

The highlighted prepositions create links that enable readers to comprehend the relationships between the book and the chair (*place*), the exam and lunch (*time*) and the echidna's walking action and the bridge (*direction*). Changing a preposition changes the relationship between the words that it connects and, as a result, the meaning of the sentence:

- *The librarian needs the book* ***beside*** *the leather armchair.*
- *The librarian needs the book* ***under*** *the leather armchair.*

Clearly, the person retrieving the librarian's book will need to look in a different location if he or she reads the second sentence instead of the first.

Prepositional Phrases

A preposition is followed by a noun or pronoun, which is called the *object* of the preposition. This object brings full meaning to the idea started by the preposition. For instance, seeing the words *beside* or *under,* a reader might think, '*beside* what?' or '*under* what?' The preposition's object provides the answer.

Together, the preposition, its object and any modifiers of that object form a structure called a *prepositional phrase*. Examine, again, this statement about the librarian's book:

- *The librarian needs the book **beside** the leather armchair.*

Here, the preposition *beside* is followed by its object, *armchair*. The noun *armchair* is modified by the article *the* and the adjective *leather.* Together, these four words form a single unit of meaning–a prepositional phrase identifying which book the librarian needs.

Because 'beside the leather armchair' describes *book,* a noun, this prepositional phrase functions as an *adjective* in this sentence. Prepositional phrases, however, can also function as *adverbs* that modify verbs and describe where, when or how an action occurred:

- *Luca walked **down** the old gravel road.* Here, *down the old gravel road* modifies the verb *walked* by describing *where* Luca walked. *Down* is the preposition, and *road* is its object.
- ***After** the rugby game, I will drive home.* Here, *after the rugby game* modifies *will drive* by identifying *when* the writer will drive home. *After* is the preposition, and *game* is its object.
- *I studied **with** her.* Here, *with her* modifies *studied* by explaining *how* (or in what situation) the writer studied. *With* is the preposition, and the pronoun *her* is its object.

The key point to remember is that if a preposition is *not* followed by an object then that word is not acting as a preposition in a sentence. Observe, for instance, the uses of the word *across* in the following passage:

- *Martin swam **across** the lake. Then, Riesa paddled her canoe **across**.*

In the first sentence, *across* is followed by an object, the noun *lake.* Therefore, *across* serves as a preposition, and *across the lake* is a prepositional phrase. In the second sentence, no noun or pronoun follows *across.* In this case, *across* has no object and is not a preposition but an adverb.

Expressions of Place, Time and Direction

A few rules can guide your use of prepositions to describe relationships of place, time and direction.

	Place	
at	Use *at* to refer to • an address • a small, fixed point	*I live **at** 1420 Miller Crossroads.* *Please show your ticket **at** the entrance.*
in	Use *in* to refer to • an enclosed space • a large area	*The family rode **in** the lift.* *The Nile River is located **in** Africa.*
on	Use *on* to refer to streets.	*The office is **on** Wolseley Road.*
	Time	
at	Use *at* when you refer to • a specific time of day • the night	*The students eat lunch **at** 11:45 a.m.* *Owls hunt **at** night.*
in	Use *in* when you refer to a period of time.	*Berenice was born **in** 1978.* *Snow melts **in** the spring.* *She runs **in** the afternoon.*
on	Use *on* when you refer to days and dates.	*The test is **on** Monday.* *Christmas is **on** 25 December.*
from	Use *from* when you define a period of time with a specific beginning time or date.	*She will visit England **from** Wednesday to Saturday.*
to	Use *to* when you define a period of time with a specific ending time or date.	*The meeting lasted from 2:15 **to** 4:30.*

until	Use *until* when you define a period of time with a specific ending time or date.	*The movie began at 5:20 and lasted* ***until*** *7:45.*
for	Use *for* to describe the duration of an event over a period of time.	*You must study* ***for*** *three hours.* *The dog has been missing* ***for*** *some time.*
during	Use *during* to describe the duration of an event over a definite, known period of time.	*He did his homework* ***during*** *the bus ride.* *Churchill was the British prime minister* ***during*** *World War II.*
since	Use *since* to describe an action that began in the past and is still continuing.	*Maria and Suzette have been best friends* ***since*** *secondary school.*
	Direction	
from	Use *from* when you express movement *away from* a place.	*The flight is leaving* ***from*** *Brisbane.*
to	Use *to* when you express movement *in the direction of* a place.	*Daljit took the train* ***to*** *Perth.*
toward	Use *toward* when you express movement *in the direction of* a place.	*The hikers walked* ***toward*** *the camp.*

Think About It

- What relationships involving place, time and direction do you need to express in your writing?
- What prepositional phrases can you construct to describe such relationships?
- How does altering the preposition in a prepositional phrase make your meaning more or less precise?

Remember that in the context of the prepositional phrase prepositions create important connections to link their objects–nouns or pronouns–to other sentence structures. These connections describe key relationships that can enrich your compositions and ensure that your reader understands important ideas that you wish to share.

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Articles and Other Determiners
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 8

Choosing suitable articles (*a*, *an* or *the*) and other determiners helps you subtly provide your reader with needed information, such as whether you're referring to specific or general things, indicating a lot or a little of something or designating possession. Consider these sentences:

- *A owl is hooting from an perch faraway.*
- *How much birds are housed at those habitat?*

Reading these sentences, you likely get the feeling that something isn't 'right' about them—that some of their parts just don't fit together appropriately. Now, look at these sentences:

- *An owl is hooting from a perch faraway.*
- *How many birds are housed at that habitat?*

These sentences read more comfortably and clearly because, in front of each noun, the writer has used an appropriate *article* or other *determiner—an, a, many* or *that*. Even though these words that

precede and modify nouns are little and unassuming, using them correctly makes a sentence flow smoothly.

Some General Rules About Article Use

Knowing how to use articles and other determiners means being able to recognize whether the associated noun is considered *count* or *noncount* (or *countable* or *uncountable*). A countable noun is a noun that has a clearly definable number. An uncountable noun is a noun that either has a number that cannot be defined (e.g., sand, water) or represents a concept rather than a tangible object (e.g., love). When you are using the three articles—*a, an* and *the*—you should observe the following rules:

- The indefinite article, *a* or *an,* is used before a singular, countable noun when the noun is first mentioned and introduced to the reader or listener:
  - *We need* ***a*** *new car.*
  - *I have* ***an*** *apple in my hand.*

- The definite article, *the,* is used when an already mentioned noun is referenced a second time or when the noun clearly represents a particular person, place or thing:
  - *We need a new car. If possible,* ***the*** *car shouldn't be expensive.*
  - *I have an apple in my hand, but I'm not sure it's* ***the*** *apple you want for your pie.*
  - ***The*** *sky is getting dark.*

Some More Examples of How Articles Are Used

To help you better understand the application of these guidelines about article use, take a look at these sample sentences, each of which is followed by an explanation of the way it uses indefinite and definite articles before its key nouns.

Dr Hadhazy is a surgeon. She is the surgeon who operated on my sister.

- *Hadhazy:* Except in a few very special cases, a proper noun like a personal name is not introduced with an article.
- *a surgeon:* There are many surgeons in the world; the indefinite article *a* notes that Dr Hadhazy is an unspecified member of this general group.
- *the surgeon:* Only one surgeon operated on the writer's sister. The word *surgeon* now refers to a particular person, so the writer uses the definite article.
- *my sister:* When a possessive pronoun like *my, his* or *our* is used before a noun, no article is needed.

The first thing we need is a map.

- *The first thing:* Only one thing can be first, so *thing* refers to a particular item and is preceded by the definite article, *the*.
- *a map:* The sentence doesn't specify what map is needed, so the indefinite article *a* is used.

Most people are afraid of death.

- *Most people:* When a word like *most*, *some* or *many* is used to modify a noun, no article is needed.
- *death:* As it is used here, *death* is a noncount noun; it takes no article since the noun is referring to death in general.

He will not be able to come because of the recent death of his father.

- *the recent death:* Now, the writer is referring not to death in general but to one particular death; therefore, the definite article, *the,* is used.
- *his father:* No article is needed because *his* precedes the noun.

If you need help, call me, and I'll give you a hand.

- *help: Help* is a noncount noun. Since the writer is not talking about a definite kind of help, no article is used.
- *a hand:* This example is, in a way, the most difficult since the writer is certainly not talking about giving someone an unspecified hand. *To give someone a hand* is an idiom meaning *to*

help. Like all idioms, it follows its own rules for article use and must be learned as a special, separate case.

Choosing Between *A* and *An*

Choosing between the two forms of the indefinite article—*a* and *an*—is a matter of pronunciation, or sound. Because English speakers find it difficult to run from one vowel sound to another in two sequential words (for instance, *a egg)*, they insert an extra *n* sound to make the transition easier and more distinct (*an egg)*. When choosing between *a* and *an,* however, don't follow a strict rule of '*a* before consonants and *an* before vowels'. To get things right, focus not on the first *letter* of a noun that follows an article but on the first *sound* of that noun. The following rule is helpful:

- *Use **a** before a word beginning with a consonant sound; use **an** before a word beginning with a vowel sound.*

Consider these examples:

- ***a** person, **a** crime, **a** university, **a** hospital*
- ***an** officer, **an** incident, **an** unusual problem, **an** hour*

In these illustrations, the nouns preceded by *a* begin with consonant sounds. While *university* begins with a vowel (*u*), the initial sound is pronounced as the consonant *y* sound. Similarly, the nouns preceded by *an* begin with vowel sounds. Although *hour* begins with the consonant *h,* that *h* is silent*,* and the first sound that you hear is the vowel digraph *ou.*

Other Determiners

The articles *a, an* and *the* are part of a larger group of words called *determiners*, modifiers that are used before nouns to mark characteristics such as quantity or possession. The following table presents some determiners, grouped according to their use with count/noncount and singular/plural nouns.

Determiners Used With All Types of Nouns:		**Determiners Used With Noncount Nouns:**	
any	*any water*	*little*	*little noise*
her	*her house*	*much*	*much sugar*
his	*his photographs*		
Mary's	*Mary's intelligence*		
my	*my hat*		
our	*our shoes*		
the	*the furniture*		
their	*their car*		
whose	*whose nutcrackers*		
your	*your motorcycle*		
Determiners Used With Singular Count Nouns:		**Determiners Used With Plural Count Nouns:**	
a	*a rugby field*	*few*	*few schools*
an	*an ostrich*	*many*	*many*
each	*each rug*	*several*	*ice cream cones*
either	*either sock*	*these*	*several glasses*
every	*every glass*	*those*	*these computers*
neither	*neither magazine*		*those ideas*
one	*one boy*		
Determiners Used With Singular Count Nouns and with Noncount Nouns:		**Determiners Used With Plural Count Nouns and With Noncount Nouns:**	
that	*that cat*	*enough*	*enough notebooks*
this	*this salt*	*more*	*more compassion*
		most	*most dishes*
		some	*some radioactivity*
		such	*such vegetables*

The Most Important Rules of All

Sometimes, when editing a first draft, even a seasoned writer may find that he or she has used an article or other determiner in an unnatural way. Because article and determiner use can be complicated, honing this skill involves observation and practice over time. For now, try focusing your attention on what is, perhaps, the most important rule to remember about such modifiers:

A singular, countable noun must be preceded by an article or determiner.

In other words, if you know (1) that a noun is countable and (2) that you're using it in its singular form, then you can almost always be sure you need an article or a determiner in front of it. For instance, you can't say *book is intriguing* or *car is broken.* You must say *that book* or *the car*.

Exceptions to this rule lie in the use of idioms—expressions that don't follow the rules but are correct because they are what educated individuals write or say. The rule says that *car* alone is impossible—that you must say *a car, my car* or something like that. But the correct idiom for how someone came to work this morning is *He came by car,* not *He came by a car.* This illustration demonstrates an even more important rule to remember about using articles and determiners: *idioms always beat rules*.

Think About It

- Which nouns in your writing are both countable and singular and should be preceded by articles or other determiners?
- What articles or determiners can you place before other count or noncount nouns to express ideas about specificity, quantity or possession?
- Based on what you have seen and heard, in what cases do idiomatic usages trump rules for article and determiner use?

As you continue observing and learning about the use of articles and determiners, considering these questions can help you choose conscientiously among such seemingly tiny words in order to make a big difference in your smooth sentence form and subtle expression.

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Conjunctions
Chapter 5, Section 1: Lesson 9

A conjunction brings things together in a sentence. Those things can be single words (nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions) or many words (phrases, clauses). Conjunctions live to link—joining things is what they do. Without them, whenever a sentence contained a list, the items in the list would pile up and collide.

There are three kinds of conjunctions: **coordinating**, **subordinating** and **correlative**. Each of these types of conjunctions joins words in a different way. If you think of a sentence as a train, then the conjunctions are the couplers, and different sorts of couplers are required for different sorts of cars.

Coordinating Conjunctions

The most common conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions, often combined into the acronym FANBOYS (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet* and *so*). Coordinating conjunctions connect similar things—like cars of identical shape. Consider these examples:

- Connect independent clauses with a comma + FANBOYS:
    - *David loves to help people,* ***but*** *he hates to argue*.

- Connect grammatical pairs with FANBOYS:
    - *David loves to help people* ***and*** *hates to argue.* (A pair of predicates)

- *David's associates enjoy spirited debates and discussions.* (A pair of nouns)
- *David and his associates cannot avoid conflict altogether.* (A pair of nouns)

- The most commonly used coordinating conjunctions are BOAS (*but, or, and, so*):
  - *Tina **and** Lawrence, two of David's associates, are particularly prickly, **so** he tends to avoid them.*
  - *He must put his distaste for argument aside **or** be overruled by their opinions.*

- *Yet* is not used as often as BOAS. Like *but*, *yet* conveys contrast, but *yet* is a bit stronger:
  - *Tina believes in the word of the law **but** understands arguments regarding the spirit of it.* (This is a simple contrast between *believing* and *understanding*.)
  - *Tina believes in the word of the law **yet** often agrees with the spirit of the law.* (This doesn't just contrast word of the law and spirit of the law; it also implies that agreeing with the spirit of the law is surprising, given that Tina usually believes in the word of the law.)

- *Nor* is a coordinating conjunction that appears with another negative, such as *not* or *no*:
  - *David will not join arguments between Tina and Lawrence, **nor** will he enter the room when the two are together.*

- *Nor* is often used as part of the correlative conjunction *Neither… nor*:
  - *Lawrence **neither** loves **nor** hates conflict.*

- Finally, there's *for*. *For* is very common—when used as a preposition (e.g., *Tina lives **for** verbal combat. When she was completing her studies, she could debate with her peers **for** hours*). It's less common as a coordinating conjunction, but when it's used as a conjunction, it means *because*.
  - *Tina and Lawrence decided to call a truce on their differing opinions, **for** years of fighting was driving a wedge in the law firm.*

You will more often see *because* or *since* instead of *for*. *Because* and *since* are subordinating conjunctions, and using them will change the structure of the entire sentence. Because subordinating conjunctions create dependent (not independent) clauses, you will need to be aware of when and where to include a comma, as discussed next.

Subordinating Conjunctions

While coordinating conjunctions connected similar cars on the train, subordinating conjunctions connect cars of different shapes and functions. These conjunctions appear at the start of subordinate (dependent) clauses, and they connect those clauses to the rest of the sentence.

Most subordinate conjunctions introduce **adverbial clauses**—dependent clauses whose function is to describe a verb, adjective or adverb in a nearby clause. Like all adverbs, these clauses are concerned with *when, why, how* and *where*, and different subordinating conjunctions are used for each of these functions.

- The WHY subordinating conjunctions and conjunctive phrases are *because, since, as, in order that, so that*
  - *David has begun to warm up to his associates **because** they are more tolerant of different viewpoints.*

- The WHEN: *after, before, once, till, until, when, since, whenever, while, as long as, now that*
  - ***Whenever** he joined the firm, he wasn't sure if he would stay.*

- The WHERE: *where, wherever, whence*
  - *He had hoped to join a firm **where** he could collaborate with his associates to help people more efficiently.*

- The HOW (including contrast and hypotheticals): *however, although, though, if, as if, even if, lest, supposing, unless, as much as, as though, no matter, provided that, rather than*

- *During their last argument, Tina agreed not to encourage conflict where none existed **if** Lawrence would be more willing to listen to her opinions without her having to raise her voice.*

One subordinating conjunction introduces a **noun clause**: *that*. When *that* is used as a subordinating conjunction (rather than as a pronoun, as in *That was unacceptable!*), it can be omitted, as in these sentences:

- *Tina's greatest struggle is that she has always felt she needed to raise her voice to be heard.*
- *Tina's greatest struggle is she has always felt she needed to raise her voice to be heard.*

However can be used as both a subordinating conjunction AND as a transitional adverb, but you can recognize the different usage:

- *David agreed to be a peacekeeper however he could*. (Here, *however* joins the dependent clause *she could* to the rest of the sentence. It's used as a subordinating conjunction.)
- *Lawrence is a traditionalist. However, he recognizes that societal values are changing.* (*However* is a transitional adverb here.)

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions work in pairs to join similar items and include the following:

Either . . . or . . .	Both . . . and . . .
Neither . . . nor . . .	As . . . as . . .
Whether . . . or . . .	Not only . . . but also . . .

Note that—with one exception—the second of each pair is a coordinating conjunction (*or, and, nor, but*). You can use the coordinating conjunctions on their own, but **when you use correlatives (*either, both, neither, whether*), you must also use the coordinating conjunctions.** In the following examples, correlatives can be seen to join 'freight cars' of identical shape:

- *David explained, '**Either** the two of you learn to hold civilised discussions, **or** I quit'.*
- *Tina said, '**Both** Lawrence **and** I hold strong opinions'.*
- *Lawrence **neither** realised the arguing was a problem **nor** considered the possibility that it could cost them their rising-star attorney.*
- *He was **not only** stunned by David's ultimatum **but also** keenly aware that the firm needed to keep David.*
- ***Whether** Lawrence agreed with Tina's opinions **or** not, he realised he needed to accept her—**not only** for the firm's sake, **but also** because her opinions were valuable.*

Correlative conjunctions must connect the same kinds of things; in other words, the sentence's structure must be parallel. The following example shows a parallel structure error:

- *Lawrence had **not only** allowed his views to get the better of him, **but also** he had done so nearly at the expense of the firm.*

This sentence joins a predicate to an independent clause. Here's one way to revise:

- *Lawrence had **not only** allowed his views to get the better of him **but also** done so nearly at the expense of the firm.*

Now both things being joined are predicates.

Think About It

- How will you know what kind of punctuation to use as you connect different kinds of sentences?
- When are commas needed with coordinating conjunctions?
- What should you look for when using correlative conjunctions?

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Sentence connections and punctuation can all seem a bit arbitrary at first, but breaking down the types of conjunctions and the rules that apply to each can make them much more manageable.

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Chapter 5, Section 2: Usage

Subjects
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 1

A clause is a group of words that includes a subject and a predicate. A simple sentence is a single clause, but a sentence can also have more than one clause. The subject of a clause is the person, place, thing or idea that the clause is about. In that clause, the subject is either *doing* something or *being* something. The subject is in the spotlight of the clause. Correctly choosing the subject of your clause is an important part of grammatical correctness since you can't be sure if your subject and verb agree in number unless you can identify your subject.

Nouns, Pronouns, Phrases and Clauses
Subjects are always nouns or other words or groups of words which function as nouns, such as the following examples:

- Noun: ***Erik Erikson*** *developed a theory of human development.*
- Nouns: ***Educators and other professionals*** *use his theory to understand children.*
- Pronoun: ***They*** *need to know what is appropriate or possible for each age group.*
- Noun phrase: *For example,* ***singing nursery rhymes*** *is appropriate for toddlers.*

Finding the Subject
Since the subject is the person, place, thing or idea that's either doing or being, in order to know the subject, you must figure out what's doing or being. In other words, when you identify the action or circumstance the clause is about, you can easily locate the subject. For each of the example sentences, the verbs and subjects are as follows.

- The action is *developed a theory.* Who or what developed a theory? *Erik Erikson*
- The action is *use*. Who uses the theory? *Educators and other professionals*
- The action is *need to know*. Who needs to know? *They*
- The verb expresses the state of being, *is appropriate*. The subject *singing nursery rhymes* has that state of being.

Invisible Subjects
When a sentence is a command, its subject is always *you*, and its subject is rarely expressed, as in this example:

- *Treat your patients with kindness*. (The subject *you* is not included in this type of sentence, but the meaning is *You, treat your patients with kindness.* The verb is *treat*.)

This structure is often referred to as 'the understood you' or 'the implied you'. This type of sentence is not usually appropriate for academic writing, but knowing about it will help you to avoid it when you complete university writing assignments. An invisible subject is usually appropriate when you are talking directly to someone.

Passive Voice Subjects
In the above examples, the subjects all control their clauses. But this isn't always the case. In a

passive voice construction, the subject is acted upon rather than acting, but it's still in the spotlight. It's still what the clause is about, as in the following example:

- ***Children*** *are influenced by a variety of cultural and socioeconomic factors.*

Note that this sentence is about children, even though this subject is acted upon (by the cultural and socioeconomic factors) rather than acting.

Subjects Following Introductory Passages

While the subject often occurs at the start of a sentence (as the subjects in the above examples do), they may just as often follow introductory material, such as transitions, introductory phrases or introductory clauses:

- *When developmental needs are met,* ***children*** *can learn more effectively.*
- *For example,* ***adolescents*** *need opportunities to socialise.*

Note that, even though the introductory material adds to the sentence, its function is descriptive. The heart of the sentence follows the introductory passage: The subject occurs at or near the beginning of the sentence.

Subjects in Inverted Sentences

In most clauses, including all of the above examples, the subject precedes the verb, but that isn't always the case. The verb may come first in situations such as these:

- The sentence is a question: *Should* ***caregivers*** *monitor and limit screen time for toddlers?* Part of the verb, *should monitor and limit,* begins the question.
- The sentence is an expletive construction: *There are* ***many television commercials*** *targeting toddlers.* Part of the verb, *are targeting*, comes after *There* and before the subject *many television commercials*.
- The writer wants to emphasize the predicate adjective: *Even more surprising* is **the amount** of screen time the average toddler experiences during a typical day. The sentence could be written *The amount of screen time the average toddler experiences during a typical day is even more surprising,* but placing the adjective phrase at the beginning of the sentence calls the reader's attention to it.

Think About It

- Where can you use the action in a sentence to identify its subject?
- Where is the verb in relation to the subject?
- What is your clause about? What—or who—is in the spotlight of your sentence?

Though the subject often appears at or near the beginning of the clause, this is not always the case. Find the spotlight of the sentence, and you will find your subject.

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Count and Noncount Nouns
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 2

When teaching a child to count, you might easily say *one robot, two robots, three robots*. Such a progression seems very natural. However, you wouldn't similarly count *one robotics, two robotics*, *three robotics*. Saying or writing *a few robotics* just feels a little strange. This scenario helps show the grammatical distinction between *count* and *noncount nouns.* Count nouns, like *robot,* are ones you can

count and make plural. *Robotics,* on the other hand, is a noncount noun, which you cannot count or make plural.

Why, does knowing the difference between count and noncount nouns really matter? You need to know whether a particular noun is countable or not for several reasons: to make singular and plural parts of a sentence agree; to apply the articles *a, an* and *the* correctly; and to use determiners like *several* or *much* appropriately.

More on the Count/Noncount Distinction

When discussing count and noncount nouns, you may encounter any of the following pairings: *count/noncount nouns, count/mass nouns, countable/uncountable nouns.* Generally speaking, *count or countable nouns* refers to things that can be broken into individual, countable units. Their associated words can be made plural, as in these examples:

- *tool* (one tool, five tools, a few tools)
- *song* (one song, twelve songs, several songs)
- *fact* (one fact, two facts, many facts)

Noncount, mass or uncountable nouns are things that cannot be counted because they're regarded as whole units. Their associated words are always used in the singular and cannot be made plural, as in these illustrations:

- *equipment* (not *equipments*)
- *music* (not *musics*)
- *information* (not *informations*)

Avoiding a form like *equipments*, *musics* or *informations* is important because such a mistake quickly snowballs to the rest of the sentence. For example, someone who identifies *information* as a count noun may erroneously state, '*Many of those informations are inaccurate'.* By making *information* plural and extending that plurality to the other italicized words, the writer has created four mistakes in a brief, six-word statement. To avoid such errors, distinguish between count and noncount nouns.

Count or Noncount Noun 'Rules'

In the examples of count and noncount nouns above, *facts* and *information* are similar sorts of things, so how do you know that *fact* belongs to one classification of noun and *information* to another? Most of the time, you know simply because you have heard and read both words often enough to know—not as a grammatical rule, but as a feeling or instinct. You have heard people say *The facts are* and *The information is* so often that you would just feel funny saying something like *those informations*.

In cases when you don't have a definite feeling or prior knowledge about whether a noun is count or noncount, some rules of thumb will help you predict into which group the noun might fall. As previously observed, if you can count a noun and make it plural, it falls under the *count* distinction. Consider the noun *towel.* Can you count it—*one towel, two towels, three towels*? Certainly! Can you make it plural—*towels*? Of course! Without a doubt, then, *towel* is a countable noun.

Determiners With Count and Noncount Nouns

How do you determine how much or how little of something you have? Determiners like *amount, much, little* and *less* quantify noncount nouns, such as *milk*, *oil*, *compassion* and *wealth*. Other determiners, like *number, many, few* and *fewer*, quantify count nouns, such as *sugar peas*, *gallons*, *kisses* and *dollars*.

That means you could write the following:

- *the amount of people* BUT *the number of activists*
- *the amount of progress* BUT *the number of changes*
- *much devastation* BUT *many accidents*
- *too much clothing* BUT *too many shoes*
- *little traffic* BUT *few cars*

- *a little* milk BUT *a few* drops

While noncount nouns are harder to identify, you can often recognize them because they fit into categories based on shared characteristics. Some common categories of noncount nouns are outlined in this table:

Category of Noncount Nouns	Examples
Abstractions, or things that seem more like 'ideas' than objects or activities	• fun, love, peace • sadness, suffering, trouble • advice, kindness • information, intelligence, knowledge
Academic subjects	• history, psychology • economics, mathematics
General categories of things	• equipment, machinery • furniture, luggage • art, music
Liquids and gases	• blood, ink, milk, soup • helium, oxygen, smoke
Materials, especially those made of particles that seem too small or numerous to be counted	• cotton, steel • beef, bread • flour, rice, salt • dirt, hair, sand
Natural occurrences	• cold, decay, heat, radioactivity • hail, lightning, weather
Sports and activities	• rugby, running • chess, poker • homework, work

A Word of Caution

The above list of noncount nouns is short and incomplete, so it can't always help determine if a noun is countable or not. However, even more extensive lists aren't completely reliable because some nouns can belong to both the count and noncount groups. In such cases, a noun's status is determined by the way the writer intends to use it in a sentence. Look, for instance, at the following illustrations. In each statement, the target noun becomes count or noncount based on subtle differences in meaning—whether the author wishes for the word to designate *distinct, individual units* or *a 'big idea' or collective group*:

- *love*
  - Count: *Josephine Baker said, 'I have two **loves**—Paris and my country'*. Here, *loves* refers to individual things for which Baker had great affection.
  - Noncount: ***Love*** is the most powerful force in the world. *Love* in this sentence designates a 'big idea'—the emotion of deep concern and affection for another.
- *soup*
  - Count: *All the **soups** in the store were sold in cans*. In this sentence, *soups* references the individual types or containers of soup available.
  - Noncount: *Americans usually serve **soup** as a separate course early in the meal*. Here, *soup* indicates a general category of food.
- *work*
  - Count: *Her library contains all the **works** of Shakespeare*. *Works* in this sense refers to the multiple, distinct plays and poems that Shakespeare wrote.

- Noncount: *We always seem to have too much* ***work*** *to do*. In this statement, *work* designates a general idea of mental or physical activity done for a purpose.

Think About It

- Why is it important to know whether a noun is count or noncount?
- How does knowing a noun's category or its ability to form a plural help you decide if it's count ornoncount?
- How does your intended meaning influence whether a noun is count or noncount?

Asking yourself these questions and analysing your intent as you write can help you make correct choices regarding the tricky count/noncount noun distinction. As a result, it will be easier to make accurate decisions about singularity, plurality and the verbs, pronouns, articles and determiners that you need to use to 'fill in' the rest of your sentences.

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Gerunds
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 3

Sometimes a verb ending in *-ing* can function as a noun. The grammatical term for this is a gerund. Consider the two examples:

- *The candidate is* ***running*** *for re-election.*
- ***Running*** *for public office requires a lot of time and money.*

In the first example, *running* is a verb or the action that the candidate is doing. In the second example, *running* is the noun. In other words, the subject of the sentence is the general act of *running.*

Understanding Gerunds

Gerunds are a kind of noun, but not every *-ing* verb is a gerund. When the *-ing* form is used as a verb, it's called the *present participl*e. Here's a quick breakdown of the difference:

The *–ing* form of the verb is part of the **present participle** in these examples, where *working* is an action (verb) that *employees* are doing:

- *More employees are* ***working*** *from home.*

In the **gerund form**, *working* becomes a noun that performs the action.

- ***Working*** *from home has benefits and drawbacks.*

Gerunds can take objects the way some verbs do:

- *Most adolescents enjoy* ***playing video games****.*

Playing is a gerund in this sentence. It is the thing adolescents enjoy doing.

Gerunds and Prepositions

Any time you have a preposition, you need to follow it with some sort of noun form (a noun, a pronoun, a noun phrase, a gerund, etc.). Often, the most effective and concise choice is to use a

gerund. This isn't a rule, but it's a useful writing tip. Consider these two pairs of sentences. The first in each pair uses a noun after the prepositions *in* and *for*; the second uses a gerund.

- *Paediatricians are experienced* ***in the diagnosis of influenza.***
  Paediatricians are experienced ***in diagnosing influenza.***
- *The research assistants prepared for* ***the measurement of the specimens.***
  The research assistants prepared for ***measuring the specimens.***

The second sentence in each pair is shorter and more to-the-point. Concise, clear writing like this gets your ideas across more effectively.

Using Gerunds After the Preposition *To*

Some writers have difficulty deciding what verbal form to use after the word *to*. After all, *to* can be two completely different things. It can be a preposition, as in these examples:

- *Nurses are accustomed* ***to communicating*** *the postoperative instructions with patients' families.*
- *Patients look forward* ***to going*** *home, but they need clear guidelines for postoperative care.*

However, *to* can also be part of an infinitive verb, as in

- *Patients are required* ***to fast*** *for 24 hours before the procedure.*

Most of the time, of course, you will find that *to* is part of an infinitive verb and is therefore followed by the base (or main) form of the verb.

Other Uses of Gerunds

Although gerunds are often used as the *subject of a verb,* they can also be the *object of some verbs.* In the example ***Walking*** *two or three miles a day is good exercise,* the gerund *walking* is the subject. However, in the sentence *The school finished* ***installing*** *new audiovisual equipment in every classroom,* the gerund *installing* is the noun that the school finished. It's the object of this sentence. This is a partial list of verbs that often have gerunds as their objects:

admit	*finish*	*discuss*	*miss*	*keep*
risk	*prevent*	*delay*	*like*	*appreciate*
forbid	*dislike*	*recall*	*avoid*	*postpone*
suggest	*joy*	*mind*	*regret*	*consider*

Here are two examples of sentences with verbs that take objects that are gerunds.

- *The main character regretted* ***spending*** *the family fortune on a yacht.* The gerund 'spending' is the object of the verb *regretted.*
- *Many physicians avoid* ***prescribing*** *antibiotics unless they are absolutely necessary.* The gerund *prescribing* is the thing that the physicians avoid.

Think About It

- How can gerunds help make your writing more concise and clearer?
- Which sentences in your writing would benefit from including gerunds as subjects?
- Which sentences could include gerunds as objects?

Gerunds often offer the shortest and simplest way to express an idea. Consider the questions above as a starting place in expanding your command of them.

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Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 4

There is one constant with language: It's always changing. Often, language change begins in conversational English where we don't notice a shift that might be more evident in writing. Consider this common example:

- *When a patient follows the nutritional guidelines, they experience fewer postoperative complications.*

This sentence may sound just fine to you! In the past, traditional grammar rules have dictated that *a student* is a singular noun, and *they* is a plural pronoun. Therefore, according to traditional grammar rules, this sentence has an error in pronoun-antecedent agreement. The antecedent is the noun that the pronoun represents, and in this case, the antecedent is *a student,* and this noun is singular.

Traditionally, the pronoun *they* has been considered plural. In recent years, the rules for using *they* have started shifting, and in some contexts, it has become acceptable to use *they* as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun. When in doubt, check with the manual for the style you are using, such as APA or Harvard, or ask your lecturer if *they* is acceptable when you want to use a singular, gender-neutral pronoun.

Ensuring Agreement

The simplest way to be inclusive and handle the issue of pronoun-antecedent agreement is to make both the antecedent noun and the pronoun plural. Here's a sample revision of the sentence from above that follows this pattern:

- *When* ***patients*** *follow the nutritional guidelines,* **they** *experience fewer postoperative complications.*

When you are writing about general populations or groups of people, consider using plurals for your antecedents so that you can also easily use the plural pronoun *they* to create pronoun-antecedent agreement. Although the use of *they* as a gender-neutral singular pronoun has become increasingly acceptable, some formal audiences may still prefer that your antecedents and pronouns follow the traditional conventions of pronoun agreement.

Finding the Antecedent

Before you can check for pronoun-antecedent agreement, though, one of the challenges is recognising the antecedent. The first step is to **identify the pronoun**. Take a look at these two examples:

- *The company is good to* ***its*** *employees.* ***They*** *are very grateful.*

The pronouns are *its* and *they*. To identify the antecedent, you may find it helpful to ask yourself, 'Who or what is this pronoun referring to?' or 'What does this pronoun actually mean?'

Here, we can ask the following questions to find the antecedents:

- ***Its***: Whose employees are these?
- ***They***: Who is very grateful?

The ***company*** *is good to its* ***employees****. They are very grateful.*

Its refers to ***the company***; *they* refers to ***employees***. By finding these antecedents, we can see that they agree in number.

Understanding A Pronoun's Role

In addition to agreeing with the antecedent, a pronoun can take the place of a noun as a subject or object or show possession, as in these examples.

Pearson

	Masculine (singular)	Feminine (singular)	Gender Neutral or Non-Binary (singular)	Plural
Subject	***He*** *studies architecture at a major university.*	***She*** *creates sculptures out of recycled paper.*	*The student became more confident after* ***they*** *met with a tutor.*	*The homebuyers hoped* ***they*** *would secure a loan.*
Object	*Gothic architecture fascinates* ***him****.*	*Environmental issues inspire* ***her****.*	*The student was grateful after the tutor helped* ***them****.*	*The homebuyers said the bank treated* ***them*** *fairly.*
Possessive	***His*** *work has been published in peer-reviewed journals.*	***Her*** *art has become popular among local collectors.*	*The tutor gave the student some suggestions for* ***their*** *next assignment.*	*The clients were excited to purchase* ***their*** *new home.*

The pronoun *one* is another gender-neutral option when you are referring to any person in general, and the pronoun *it* can be used for a nonperson. Here are a few examples.

	Neutral Singular (person)	Neutral Singular (nonperson)
Subject	***One*** *should remain calm in an emergency.*	*This university is popular with working parents because* ***it*** *offers a variety of online courses.*
Object	*Reading literature can provide* ***one*** *with new insights.*	*When the technician realised the keyboard was broken, she took* ***it*** *apart.*
Possessive	*There are times when one should keep* ***one's*** *opinions to oneself.*	*The hospital's emergency care is exceptional, but* ***its*** *physical therapy department has some flaws.*

Think About It

- What options do you have when matching pronouns to their antecedents?
- Where will possessive pronouns help clarify ownership?
- What can you do to be sure your pronouns are *gender-appropriate* or *non-biased*?

With the answers to these questions in mind, your use of pronouns will be sharp and specific!

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Predicates
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 5

All clauses are made up of a subject and predicate. While the subject is the person or thing that the sentence is about, the predicate completes the clause. A subject all by itself does nothing, even if it's introduced and described. If someone were to say, 'The alarm clock', you would ask, 'What about the alarm clock?' And if someone said, 'Late one night, the old mechanical alarm clock on my night table', you would still ask, 'What about it? What did the alarm clock do? Why even mention the alarm clock?' The subject always needs a predicate.

The Simple Predicate

A simple predicate is an unadorned verb: *The alarm clock* ***rang****.* There may be more than one verb in a simple predicate: *The alarm clock* ***woke up*** *and* ***rang****.* The verb or verbs in a simple predicate may be made up of more than one word since verbs can be formed with auxiliaries: *The alarm clock* ***did ring*** *and* ***would not stop****.*

Complete Predicates

Most predicates consist of more than verbs: They may also include modifiers of the verbs (such as adverbs), as well as any objects or complements of those verbs and the words that modify the objects or complements. In a sentence such as *The old mechanical alarm clock on my night table went off in the middle of the night, waking the entire household,* the subject is *The old mechanical alarm clock on my night table*, and the rest of the sentence is the complete predicate. A complete predicate may include the following:

Transitive verbs and their direct objects: If a verb is transitive, that means it requires a direct object.

- *My family hates that alarm clock.* The subject is *family*; its verb is *hates*; the direct object of that verb is *alarm clock*.
- *I threw that stupid alarm clock across the room and smashed it against the wall.* The subject is *I*; the rest of the sentence is the predicate. Note that the sentence has a compound predicate (*threw* and *smashed*) and that each verb takes a direct object (*that stupid alarm clock* and *it*).

Transitive verbs and indirect objects: An indirect object tells who (or what) the action of the verb is to or for. It doesn't directly receive the action—it benefits, in some way, from the action.

- *This clock gives me endless grief. Grief* is the direct object of the verb *gives*; *me* is its indirect object—the clock gives grief to me.

Intransitive verbs and predicate adjectives: Intransitive linking verbs, like 'to be' and 'to seem', can be followed by material that describes the subject of the clause.

- *My alarm clock was expensive.* The verb *to be* is intransitive (*was* is the third person singular past tense). The adjective *expensive* describes the subject, *alarm clock.*
- *It will be hard to replace.* Again, the verb is *to be* (*will be* is its future tense). The adjective phrase *hard to replace* describes *it.*

Intransitive verbs and predicate nominatives: These verbs may be followed by nouns and noun passages which name the subject in a different way.

- *As it turns out, that alarm clock was a priceless family heirloom. Heirloom* is the predicate noun.
- In a predicate nominative construction, it may help to think of the linking verb (usually *to be*) as an equal sign. In this case, the *alarm clock* is the *priceless family heirloom.* The two things are identical.
- You might think, since the two things are identical, that the subject and its predicate nominative might be switched—*A priceless family heirloom was, as it turns out, that alarm clock.* But switching places shows the important difference between subject and predicate nominative: The spotlight of the sentence isn't on the heirloom in the first sentence—it's on the clock, and rightly so.

Think About It

- What is the subject of your sentence or clause and how can it help identify the predicate?
- How can knowing what each of your subjects is being or doing help shape your predicates?
- What else might you include and/or revise to make your predicates complete?

Pearson

Most sentences do not have simple predicates. Modifiers—words, phrases and even clauses—may cluster around the verb, making the sentence more informative than it would be if it were made only of the subject and verb alone. Recognising what constitutes a complete predicate will help you understand how your sentences are structured, which will sharpen your writing.

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Subject-Verb Agreement
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 6

When constructing sentences, there is a lot to consider: content, word choice, word order, punctuation and so much more. However, no matter what other elements your sentence has, you must have subject-verb agreement to create clear sentences.

The Basic Rules of Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is a grammar rule that applies to sentences in the simple present tense and other tenses that use *am/is/are, was/were* or *has/have.* When you use these tenses, each verb must agree with its subject. The subject of a sentence is the noun or pronoun that performs the action. A subject can be first-person, second-person or third-person. It can also be plural or singular. The following charts demonstrate how to make simple present-tense verbs agree with each type of subject.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	**I am** a student.	**We are** students.
Second Person	**You are** a student	**You all are** students.
Third Person	**Samir is** a student.	**Jack and Luis are** students.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	**I have** several questions.	**We have** several questions.
Second Person	**You have** several questions.	**You all have** several questions.
Third Person	**The detective has** several questions.	**The children have** several questions.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	**I eat** lunch at noon.	**We eat** lunch at noon.
Second Person	**You eat** lunch at noon.	**You all eat** lunch at noon.
Third Person	**Diego eats** lunch at noon.	**The cats eat** lunch at noon.

The past-tense form of 'to be' also has different spellings for each type of subject, as demonstrated below.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	**I was** a student.	**We were** students.
Second Person	**You were** a student	**You all were** students.
Third Person	**Samir was** a student.	**Jack and Luis were** students.

The verbs is/am/are, was/were and has/have are used to create past progressive, present progressive, present perfect and present perfect progressive tenses. The following examples demonstrate these tenses:

- **Past Progressive:** *The students were taking a test. The lecturer was reading a newspaper.*

- **Present Progressive:** *The family is hosting a foreign exchange student. The participants are completing a survey.*
- **Present Perfect:** *Dr Jones has lived in Craigieburn for 15 years. She and her husband have worked at the university since 1995.*
- **Present Perfect Progressive:** *The cats have been sleeping all afternoon. The neighbour has been growing vegetables in her backyard since last summer.*

Common Causes of Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

When there's a lack of agreement between the subject and verb in a sentence, readers can end up confused. Usually, the subject and verb don't agree because a third-person subject is paired with a verb that has the wrong ending or spelling. That kind of error can occur in the following situations.

The plural form of a third-person subject does not end in –s. Some examples of these nouns include *people*, *children*, *women* and *men*.

- ***Incorrect:*** *Children* ***learns (?)*** *by example.*
- ***Correct:*** *Children* ***learn*** *by example.*
- ***Incorrect:*** *Cacti* ***thrives (?)*** *in arid climates.*
- ***Correct:*** *Cacti* ***thrive*** *in arid climates.*

Other words appear between the subject and verb. This often occurs when there is a prepositional phrase after the subject. This causes challenges because a prepositional phrase also includes a noun, but the object of a preposition cannot be the subject of a sentence. You can avoid this lack of agreement if you mentally leave out words between the subject and verb so the true subject and verb are easier to find:

- ***Incorrect: Each*** *of the students* ***are (?)*** *responsible for paying tuition costs on time*. (If you left out *of the students*, the prepositional phrase between the subject and verb, you would get *Each are.* The verb *are* does not agree with *Each*, so it's incorrect.)
- ***Correct: Each*** *of the students* ***is*** *responsible for paying tuition costs on time.*
- ***Incorrect:*** *The* ***students*** *at this university* ***has (?)*** *many tutoring options.*
- ***Correct:*** *The* ***students*** *at this university* ***have*** *many tutoring options.*

A compound subject is connected by *and*. When you have two or more subjects connected by *and*, the subject is plural and needs a verb that does not end in -s:

- ***Incorrect:*** *The chief executive officer and the human resources manager* ***supports (?)*** *fair labour practices.* (Since *chief executive officer and the human resources manager* is connected with *and*, it's a plural subject and needs a verb that ends in –s.)
- ***Correct:*** *The chief executive officer and the human resources manager* ***support*** *fair labour practices.*

A compound subject is connected by *or* or *nor*. The verb should agree with the part of the subject that is nearest to the verb itself.

- ***Incorrect:*** *Either the chief executive officer or the human resources manager* ***plan (?)*** *to announce the new policies next month.* (Since *the chief executive officer or the human resources manager* is connected by *either/or*, the verb needs to agree with *manager*, the part of the subject that's nearest to the verb; therefore, the verb should end in -s.)
- ***Correct:*** *Either the chief executive officer or the human resources manager* ***plans*** *to announce the new policies next month.*
- ***Incorrect:*** *Either the manager or the directors* ***is (?)*** *hosting a webcast.* (Since the subjects are connected by *either/or*, the verb needs to agree with the closest noun, *directors*.)
- ***Correct:*** *Either the manager or the directors* ***are*** *hosting a webcast.*

An indefinite pronoun is the subject of a sentence. Indefinite pronouns like *any, everyone* and *nothing* have singular meanings and should have verbs that end in –s. The following indefinite pronouns are always singular:

anybody, anyone, anything	*neither, either*
each	*nobody, no one, nothing*
everybody, everyone, everything	*somebody, someone, something*

- ***Incorrect:*** *Any of us* ***are*** *qualified to do the job. (*Because *Any* is a singular indefinite pronoun, it cannot be paired with the plural verb *are*.)
- ***Correct:*** *Any of us* ***is*** *qualified to do the job*. (*Any* refers to 'any one person', which is singular; therefore, the verb should be *is*.)

A collective noun is the subject of a sentence. Collective nouns like *class, family* and *team* may refer to a group that acts as a single unit or they may refer to individual members of that group; thus, these nouns can vary with regard to subject-verb agreement depending on the meaning the writer intends. Consider the following examples:

- ***Collective group:*** *The sales team* ***exceeds*** *quarterly goals on a regular basis.* (Treating the sales team as a collective, singular subject by using a verb in its singular form indicates that the sales team, as a whole, exceeds the quarterly goals.)
- ***Individual members:*** *The sales team* ***exceed*** *quarterly goals on a regular basis.* (Using *team* to refer to individual members of the team and using a verb in its plural form indicates that each individual member of the sales team exceeds his or her quarterly goal.)

Your sentence begins with the words *there is* or *there are* (or *there was* or *there were*). When a sentence begins with *there*, the verb should agree with the *subject complement*, which is the closest noun or pronoun that follows the verb:

- *There* ***is*** *a trend in sustainable practices such as solar panels and LED lighting.* (Since *trend* follows *there* and *trend* is singular, the verb should be *is*.)
- *There* ***are*** *many ways to improve customer loyalty and employee satisfaction.* (Since *ways* follows *there* and *ways* is plural, the verb should be *are*.)

Think About It

- What verb endings or spellings are appropriate for third-person, plural subjects?
- What verbs should go with indefinite pronouns that act as subjects?
- When should you use *there is* versus *there are?*

Subject-verb agreement means that the verbs have the correct spelling or ending to match the subject of each sentence. Checking the subjects and verbs in each sentence can help you to create a draft with consistent subject-verb agreement.

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Simple Verb Tenses
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 7

What makes the simple verb tense *simple*? In this verb tense, the past and present do *not* require auxiliary verbs (helping verbs) for meaning. That's what makes them simple, or a little less complicated. For example

- Simple past: *The hospital* ***opened*** *a new physical therapy centre last year.*
- Simple present: *The therapists* ***use*** *state-of-the art methods and equipment.*

Though the simple future tense *does* use an auxiliary verb (*will*), it's also considered a simple tense. For example:

Pearson

- Simple future: *The university **will offer** more business courses next year.*

The simple verb tenses are the least complicated way to express ideas, so knowing when to use them will help you write more clearly.

Knowing Which Simple Tense to Use

One way to decide which tense to use is to think in terms of *when*. If you're writing about something you *did* in the past, you will use one of the *past tenses*. When you're discussing *what you do on a regular basis*, you will work with *present tense*. To write about something you *have not done yet but expect to do in the future*, you will use *future tense*. The simple tenses look like this:

Simple Past	Simple Present	Simple Future
*The nurse **monitored** the patient closely.* The action happened in the past.	*The employees **attend** a meeting every Tuesday.* The action is something that is *repeated, usual or habitual.*	*The students **will take** exams next week.* The action has not happened yet but is *expected or predicted to happen.*

Conjugating (Forming) Verbs in Simple Tenses

Simple Past

To make your verbs reflect simple past, you will need to know how to form the past tense of regular verbs. You will also want to make sure you're comfortable making irregular verbs reflect past tense.

- Regular Verbs: For **simple past tense**, regular verbs take the ***-****ed* ending. It's conjugated from the base form of the verb (or the infinitive) **+** *ed* (or *-d*). Consider these examples:
    - *The participants **watched** a soothing nature video for five minutes.*
    - *The researchers **measured** the participants' heart rates.*

The base forms of these verbs are *to watch* and *to measure.* Because they're regular verbs, putting them in the past tense is relatively simple.

- Irregular Verbs: Some verbs change their form and don't follow the ***-****ed* rule, which is part of what makes them *irregular*. For example:
    - *The participants **became** more relaxed after watching the video.*

Here, the base form is *to become*, but instead of adding *-ed*, the *o* in *become* changes to an *a* to make *became*, which is past tense. Irregular verbs can have a variety of past tense forms.

Simple Present

Simple present tense reflects an action that is repeated or habitual. It can also show what a person thinks or believes. Regular verbs follow a consistent conjugation model, but look carefully! You will see that the third-person singular form (the one that goes with *he, she* or *it)* takes an *-s* or *-es* at the end:

- *Daniela **drives** a small car.*
- *I **take** the bus.*

In the preceding examples, the verb tense is in the present.

Simple Future

Simple future tense can refer to an expected action in the near or far future, an immediate future action or a prediction of an action. It's formed by *will* and the base form of the verb:

- ***Expected near future action:*** *She **will write** her essay tomorrow.*

- ***Expected far future action*****:** *The students* ***will need*** *to plan for retirement.*
- ***Immediate future action:*** *I'm cold, so I* ***will turn on*** *the heater.*
- ***Prediction****: I* ***will pass*** *the test!*

In each of these examples, the action hasn't yet occurred. Even if the action is expected to occur a few seconds from now, it's still in the future.

Think About It

- When did the actions you're writing about happen?
- How should tense change based on when these actions occurred?
- Which actions are expected or predicted to happen?

Knowing the time frame of an event will help you determine the best tense, making the actions you write about easier for readers to understand.

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Progressive and Perfect Verb Tenses
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 8

In addition to simple tenses, there are also progressive and perfect tenses. Progressive and perfect tenses combine a helping verb, such as *is* or *was,* with an active verb, and there are three types.

- Progressive (past, present, future)
- Perfect (past, present, future)
- Perfect progressive (past, present, future)

Progressive (Also Known as Continuous)

This tense emphasizes that the action *is currently happening* or *was/will be continuously happening at the same time as something else*. The following examples demonstrate progressive tense:

- *I* ***am typing*** *this sentence.*
- *She* ***was enjoying*** *the game until it got too difficult.*
- *Soon, they* ***will be looking*** *for a new approach to the problem.*

These examples reflect a sense of *immediate* or *ongoing* action. This verb tense can help you be even more specific about the *duration* of an action.

When to Use the Progressive Tense

You will mostly use this verb tense in conversation or in personal reflection. For example, you might tell someone on the phone what you're doing *right then* during the conversation, or you might remark on something that a person is *always* doing or not doing. You might also use this tense to express goals or to provide immediate observations. Knowing what progressive tense looks like can help you better determine when to use it.

What Progressive Tense Looks Like

The past progressive tense creates the sense that an action *occurred over a period of time in the past.*

Pearson

Past Progressive	
The event happened in the past, but the action was ***ongoing.***	*The band members* ***were rehearsing*** *all day on Saturday.*
The action was ongoing but was ***interrupted or stopped.***	*They* ***were playing*** *in perfect harmony until one member broke a string.*
The ongoing action occurred ***simultaneously*** *with another action.*	*The visitors* ***were admiring*** *the garden when a rainbow appeared.*

The present progressive tense creates the sense that the action is *occurring right now*, is *ongoing* or is *habitual.*

Present Progressive	
An action that is ***happening right now*** *or immediately.*	*The fire* ***is spreading*** *rapidly.*
The action is happening now and is ***ongoing.***	*She* ***is studying*** *to become a neurologist.*
The speaker ***remarks on an action*** *as ongoing (usually accompanied by 'always' or 'constantly').*	*Humans* ***are*** *always* ***learning.***

The future progressive tense gives us a sense of ho*w the action is expected or anticipated to* happen.

Future Progressive	
A future action that is ***anticipated*** *to be ongoing.*	*Next year, I* ***will be working*** *on my dissertation.*

Perfect

This verb tense lets writers explain that one action was completed before another action or an earlier time. In a sense, it helps connect or bridge different times so that the past can apply to the present or a further past to a recent past. Unlike the progressive tense, perfect tense provides a more solid sense of beginning. While the perfect may not make any promises about the completion of an action, it roots readers in a certain time. Progressive tense, by its ongoing nature, does not provide the same sense of beginning or ending, especially in comparison to the simple tenses. Compare progressive, perfect and simple here:

- [Progressive]: *Esteban and Julie* ***were deciding*** *where to honeymoon when they heard about the hurricane.*
- [Perfect]: *Esteban and Julie* ***have decided*** *that Cancun is the best choice for their honeymoon.*
- [Simple]: *Esteban and Julie* ***decided*** *that Cancun is the best choice for their honeymoon.*

The first sentence suggests that the discussion is an **ongoing** one, something they revisit from time to time. In the second sentence, **the action—**making the decision of where to go—is **complete**. The emphasis is not so much *where* they decided to go as it is that *they decided on it* (completed the action). The third, the simple form, occurred at a specific time and doesn't extend beyond it.

When to Use the Perfect Tense

Comparing the tenses is the best way to figure out which one to use. The following examples offer some context to clarify how these tenses work.

	Past	Present	Future
Simple	*I* ***walked*** *through the park yesterday.*	*I* ***walk*** *through the park every day.*	*I* ***will walk*** *through the park later.*
Progressive	*When I* ***was walking*** *through the park, I saw a kangaroo.*	*I* ***am walking*** *through the park right now.*	*I* ***will be walking*** *through the park later.*

Perfect	*I **had walked** through the park, but I didn't see the changes.*	*I **have walked** through the park on occasion, but I don't want to today.*	*I **will have walked** through the park by then, so we can talk at that time.*
Perfect Progressive	*I **had been walking** through the park when I suddenly fell ill.*	*I'm tired because I **have been walking** through the park.*	*I **will have been walking** through the park before going to a meeting.*

Notice how each of these examples puts the action in a slightly different context.

Think About It

- Where should the progressive be used to describe events that are ongoing?
- Where is the perfect tense needed to show a beginning or ending?
- Which verbs might need revision, to perfect or progressive, depending on their context?

The differences in meaning with progressive tenses and perfect tenses can be slight, but using them appropriately will deliver your intended meaning to your readers with clarity and accuracy.

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Using Verb Tenses Correctly
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 9

Most written works use a variety of verb tenses, particularly when they refer to a combination of past, present and future actions or situations. Therefore, using the correct tense is an important way to help readers understand when situations occur. Verb-tense errors happen when a writer mistakenly uses a verb tense that does not match the timeframe described in the sentence. This usually occurs when past-tense verbs are missing past-tense endings or spellings. The following examples demonstrate three variations in using verb tenses within a single sentence.

- **All of the actions in the sentence occur in the present:** *Schools **require** students to take history courses, and students sometimes **struggle** with the content.*
- **All of the actions in the sentence occur in the past:** *Australia **adopted** a national curriculum in 2008 that **standardised** instruction in humanities and other content areas.*
- **One action is in the present, but the other action is in the past:** *Students **should learn** about The Great Depression because it **affected** many of the political movements and economic policies during the 1930s and 1940s.*

In this last example, the writer mentions a present situation and a past situation, so a shift in verb tenses was necessary. The following lesson includes some techniques for using verb tenses correctly and for knowing when you may need to switch verb tenses.

When to Use Present Tense

Anytime you are describing a situation or condition that occurs right now (in the present) or that is ongoing, use the present tense. For example, suppose an assignment is to evaluate a specific company's sustainability practices. When describing what the company does on a daily or routine basis, you would use present tense. In the examples below, the verbs are in **bold.**

- *The company **prevents** paper waste by using electronic forms and statements.*
- *When paper communications **are** essential, the company **uses** recycled products with at least 50 percent postconsumer content.*
- *The company also **uses** LED fixtures in all office spaces and warehouses.*

Other situations that require you to write in the present tense include the following:

- In a personal learning reflection, you might include sentences that describe your current preferences or skill levels. Example: *I **am** an introverted person, but I **enjoy** group projects.*
- In a case study about a student, patient or psychological research participant, you might include sentences that describe that person's current or on-going qualities or characteristics. Example: *Emma **struggles** with word problems and fractions.*
- When writing about a current trend, social problem or political topic, use present tense to describe current or ongoing situations. Example: *Smartphones **fascinate** toddlers, but they **interfere** with authentic social interactions.*

In these examples, the present-tense verbs help readers understand that the situations occur presently. Sometimes this might feel confusing if a situation occurs now but also occurred in the past. For example, consider the sentence about *Emma,* the subject of an educational case study. If she struggles with word problems and fractions today, she also struggled with them when she was being observed by the person writing the case study. However, she still struggles, so present tense is appropriate. Using past-tense verbs would express that she no longer struggles.

However, other sentences in the essays where these sentences would occur may need to use past-tense verbs. A common misconception about English grammar rules and academic essays is that every sentence must use the same tense. This misconception can actually cause errors in your writing!

When to Use Past Tense

In some pieces of writing, you might need to describe both current situations and past events. For example, if you're writing a report that evaluates a company's sustainability practices. In order to evaluate the company's efforts, you might also need to write about what the company did in the past and compare that with what the company is doing now. Therefore, it's necessary for your report to include both past-tense verbs and present-tense verbs. Anytime you are describing an event, situation or practice from the past, use past-tense verbs. In the examples below, the verbs are in **bold**:

- *The company **earned** a bad reputation in 2010 when it **was fined** for illegal dumping practices.*
- *The company's electricity usage in 2010 **was** much higher than the industry standard.*
- *Employees **complained** in a 2012 survey that the company **did** not provide recycling receptacles.*

Some common writing tasks when you may need to use past-tense verbs include the following:

- Essays about historical events
- Learning reflections that involve describing tasks you completed
- Effects or causes that happened in the past and are no longer happening
- Signal-phrase citations in Harvard or APA Style: *Crooks et al. (2015) found that . . .*

There may be some tasks, such as literary analysis, where you may need to use 'literary present' to describe what *happens* in a film or work of literature. If you are taking such courses, consult with your lecturer about when past tense versus literary present is most appropriate.

When to Combine Present and Past

Although some sentences stay in the same tense, other sentences might use both tenses if they describe two different timeframes. Here are a few more examples from the corporate topic:

- *Although the company **used to have** a negative reputation, people now **regard** the company as a bastion of environmental sustainability.* (This sentence compares a past situation with a present situation, so both tenses are appropriate.)
- *The company **offers** employee incentives for using public transportation because employees **complained** about the lack of parking spaces.* (In this example, the company still offers the

incentive, so *offers* needs to be in present tense. However, the complaints happened in the past and are not still happening, so *complained* is the best choice.)

How to Find Verb-Tense Errors

If you struggle with verb-tense errors, you improve over time by using two main practices:

1. Pay close attention to verbs in your writing, and decide whether each verb describes the past, present or future. Students with verb-tense challenges are more likely to forget past-tense endings or spellings than to use present tense incorrectly. When you see a verb in the wrong tense, add the correct spelling or ending (or remove the ending that isn't necessary). Here is an example of a verb-tense error and the correction:

- **Incorrect:** When Emma received a copy of the exam, she **chews** her pencil nervously and looked at the floor.
- **Correct:** When Emma received a copy of the exam, she **chewed** her pencil nervously and looked at the floor.

2. Determine why you struggle with verb tenses. Perhaps English is your second (or third) language, and verbs in your first language have different rules for changing tenses. Perhaps you only struggle with verb tenses for irregular verbs. Knowing the *why* will help you to develop the self-awareness to prevent verb errors in future writing.

Think About It

- Which sentences describe only present events or only past events?
- Which sentences describe a mix of both past and present?
- What factors make verb tenses difficult in your writing?

Considering these questions can help you to choose accurate verb tenses.

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Being and Linking Verbs
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 10

In some sentences, the main verb may not express an action. Instead, the verb might link the subject of the sentence to an adjective or noun. The verb *to be* is the most common linking verb, but there are others. The verb *to be* can also be used as a helping verb.

The Verb *To Be*

The verb *to be* is used more frequently than any other verb in English—both as a helping, or auxiliary, verb and as a main verb. There are eight forms of the verb *to be*, as outlined below:

Verb Form	Examples	
Base form: ***be***	*The candidates may **be** nervous about the upcoming election.*	
Present tense: ***am, is, are***	*I **am** eager to see who wins.* *You **are** overjoyed to be running.* *He **is** a reluctant candidate.*	*We **are** opening the polls.* *You **are** preparing to vote.* *They **are** counting the ballots.*
Past tense: ***was, were***	*I **was** awaiting the results.* *You **were** sitting patiently.* *She **was** delivering the news.*	*We **were** jittery during the delay.* *You **were** apprehensive.* *They **were** upset by the outcome.*

Present participle (or active voice): ***being***	*The winner is* ***being*** *announced to the masses.*
Past participle (or passive voice): ***been***	*The candidate has* ***been*** *notified of his victory.*

To Be as a Helping Verb

As a helping verb, *to be* works with other verbs to create the *progressive,* or *continuous, tenses* and the *passive voice*. These constructions express nuances about a main verb, including the action's time frame or its relationship to the subject.

Construction and Meaning	Examples
The Progressive, or Continuous, Tenses	
Past, present and future forms of the verb *to be* can be combined with the *present participle* of a main verb to identify continuous, expected or ongoing actions.	• *I* ***was thinking*** *about donating my bicycle to the charity auction.* • *What items* ***are*** *you* ***going*** *to contribute?* • *The Children's Centre* ***will be collecting*** *donations each weekend this month.*
The Passive Voice	
A form of the verb *to be* can be combined with the *past participle* of a main verb to form the passive voice. This voice indicates that the verb's action is being performed on the grammatical subject.	• *The Children's Centre* ***is supported*** *by various benefactors.* • *Pledges* ***are being sought*** *for the next fiscal year.*

To Be as a Main Verb

When used as a main verb, *to be* acts as a *linking verb*. A *linking verb* does not show action; instead, it connects a sentence's subject to a word in the predicate that complements, or completes, the subject's meaning. This *subject complement* can be a noun that renames the subject or an adjective that modifies it. Look at these examples:

- ***Angelo is*** *the* ***chairperson*** *of the committee.*

Here, the linking verb *is* connects the subject *Angelo* to the noun *chairperson*—a subject complement, or *predicate noun*, that identifies *Angelo*.

- ***He was*** *quite* ***happy*** *when he won the election.*

Here, the linking verb *was* connects the subject *he* to the adjective *happy*—a subject complement, or *predicate adjective*, that describes *he.*

Other Linking Verbs

While the forms of *to be* are the most common linking verbs, other verbs can also be used to 'link' a subject to an identifying noun or modifying adjective in the predicate. Several alternate linking verbs are illustrated below:

State of Being Verbs	
appear	*The students* ***appeared*** *confused when the lecture began.*
become	*They* ***became*** *more comfortable after the lecturer shared an example.*
seem	*The concepts* ***seemed*** *confusing at first but became easier with practice.*
grow	*The students* ***grew*** *accustomed to working in groups.*
prove	*The lecturer's methods* ***proved*** *effective.*

Sensory Verbs	
feel	*The freshly-baked bread still* ***feels*** *too hot.*
look	*The pepperoni and mushroom pizza* ***looks*** *delicious.*
smell	*That spice* ***smells*** *disgusting.*
sound	*A whistling kettle* ***sounds*** *irritatingly loud.*
taste	*The tacos* ***taste*** *disappointingly bland.*

Think About It

- What forms of the verb *to be* can you combine with main verbs?
- Where will using *to be* as a main verb allow you to 'link' a sentence's subject to a key noun or adjective in the predicate?
- What alternate linking verbs could you use in your writing to forge relationships between subjects and their complements?

Keeping these questions in mind, you can choose between *to be* and the other linking verbs to connect your subjects and predicates, and you can correctly use the forms of *to be* to support main verbs.

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Irregular Verbs
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 11

In some sentences, the main verb may not express an action. Instead, the verb might link the subject of the sentence to an adjective or noun. The verb *to be* is the most common linking verb, but there are others. The verb *to be* can also be used as a helping verb.

The Verb *To Be*

The verb *to be* is used more frequently than any other verb in English—both as a helping, or auxiliary, verb and as a main verb. There are eight forms of the verb *to be*, as outlined below:

Verb Form	Examples	
Base form: ***be***	*The candidates may* ***be*** *nervous about the upcoming election.*	
Present tense: ***am, is, are***	*I* ***am*** *eager to see who wins.* *You* ***are*** *overjoyed to be running.* *He* ***is*** *a reluctant candidate.*	*We* ***are*** *opening the polls.* *You* ***are*** *preparing to vote.* *They* ***are*** *counting the ballots.*
Past tense: ***was, were***	*I* ***was*** *awaiting the results.* *You* ***were*** *sitting patiently.* *She* ***was*** *delivering the news.*	*We* ***were*** *jittery during the delay.* *You* ***were*** *apprehensive.* *They* ***were*** *upset by the outcome.*
Present participle (or active voice): ***being***	*The winner is* ***being*** *announced to the masses.*	
Past participle (or passive voice): ***been***	*The candidate has* ***been*** *notified of his victory.*	

To Be as a Helping Verb

As a helping verb, *to be* works with other verbs to create the *progressive,* or *continuous, tenses* and the *passive voice*. These constructions express nuances about a main verb, including the action's time frame or its relationship to the subject.

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Construction and Meaning	Examples
The Progressive, or Continuous, Tenses	
Past, present and future forms of the verb *to be* can be combined with the *present participle* of a main verb to identify continuous, expected or ongoing actions.	• *I **was thinking** about donating my bicycle to the charity auction.* • *What items **are** you **going** to contribute?* • *The Children's Centre **will be collecting** donations each weekend this month.*
The Passive Voice	
A form of the verb *to be* can be combined with the *past participle* of a main verb to form the passive voice. This voice indicates that the verb's action is being performed on the grammatical subject.	• *The Children's Centre **is supported** by various benefactors.* • *Pledges **are being sought** for the next fiscal year.*

To Be as a Main Verb

When used as a main verb, *to be* acts as a *linking verb*. A *linking verb* does not show action; instead, it connects a sentence's subject to a word in the predicate that complements, or completes, the subject's meaning. This *subject complement* can be a noun that renames the subject or an adjective that modifies it. Look at these examples:

- ***Angelo is** the **chairperson** of the committee.*

Here, the linking verb *is* connects the subject *Angelo* to the noun *chairperson*—a subject complement, or *predicate noun*, that identifies *Angelo*.

- ***He was** quite **happy** when he won the election.*

Here, the linking verb *was* connects the subject *he* to the adjective *happy*—a subject complement, or *predicate adjective*, that describes *he.*

Other Linking Verbs

While the forms of *to be* are the most common linking verbs*,* other verbs can also be used to 'link' a subject to an identifying noun or modifying adjective in the predicate. Several alternate linking verbs are illustrated below:

State of Being Verbs	
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Sensory Verbs	
feel	*The freshly-baked bread still **feels** too hot.*
look	*The pepperoni and mushroom pizza **looks** delicious.*
smell	*That spice **smells** disgusting.*
sound	*A whistling kettle **sounds** irritatingly loud.*
taste	*The tacos **taste** disappointingly bland.*

Think About It

- What forms of the verb *to be* can you combine with main verbs?

- Where will using *to be* as a main verb allow you to 'link' a sentence's subject to a key noun or adjective in the predicate?
- What alternate linking verbs could you use in your writing to forge relationships between subjects and their complements?

Keeping these questions in mind, you can choose between *to be* and the other linking verbs to connect your subjects and predicates, and you can correctly use the forms of *to be* to support main verbs.

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Helping Verbs
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 12

Consider the answers that your friend Antonio might offer when you ask if he is ever going to marry his long-time girlfriend, Griselda:

- I *am marrying* Griselda next month.
- I *did marry* her!
- I *might marry* her one of these days.
- I *must marry* her since I promised my mother.
- I *would marry* her if her mother weren't so aggravating.

Even though the main verb—*marry*—is the same in these sentences, each response describes Antonio's intentions towards Griselda quite differently. These varying shades of meaning are the result of Antonio's differing choices of helping verb—*am, did, might, must* or *would.* In the context of a verb phrase, a *helping verb* is placed before a main verb to 'help' add complex information about time or mood to an expressed action. As Antonio's answers illustrate, choosing appropriate helping verbs when you write is necessary to communicate with accuracy.

Be, Have **and** ***Do***

Also called *auxiliary verbs*, helping verbs can be divided into two categories: the forms of *be, have* and *do* and the *modal auxiliaries*. *Be, have* and *do* can be used as either main verbs or helping verbs. In both usages, they must be conjugated, or altered in form, to match with their subjects.

	Main Verb	Helping Verb
be	*I* ***am*** *happy to have completed the race.*	*He* ***is running*** *in a marathon today.*
have	*I* ***have*** *two turtles and a dog as pets.*	*The dog* ***has buried*** *a turtle in the yard.*
do	*I* ***do*** *my homework immediately after school.*	*She* ***does need*** *help with her homework.*

When used in verb phrases as helping verbs, *be, have* and *do* provide information about time and emphasis, as outlined in the following table:

Verb Forms	Meaning as a Helping Verb	Examples
Am, are, is, was, were, be, been	*Be* is used to form the *progressive tenses*, which provide information about continuous, expected or ongoing actions.	• *Right now, I* ***am worrying****.* • *We* ***are taking*** *an exam tomorrow.* • *The teacher* ***is planning*** *to make all the remaining exams difficult.* • *I* ***was swimming*** *this morning while my friends* ***were studying.*** • *Now, I* ***will be studying*** *all night.*

	Be is also used to form the *passive voice*, which demonstrates that something is performing the verb's action *on* the subject.	• *The last exam* ***was failed*** *by half the class.*
Has, have, had	*Have* is used to form the *perfect tenses*, which describe actions that are completed or ongoing.	• *At last, he* ***has received*** *his acceptance letter.* • *We* ***have awaited*** *the university's decision since May.* • *When I called Misha, she* ***had heard*** *the news already.*
Do, does, did	*Do* is used to form the *emphatic tense*, which adds emphasis and can be used to create questions and negative expressions.	• *Regardless of what Cam says, I* ***do have*** *a date for the dance.* • ***Does*** *she* ***have*** *a date?* • *Marlon definitely* ***did*** *not* ***ask*** *her to the dance.*

Note that when *be* and *have* are used as helping verbs, the main verbs in the resulting verb phrases are altered—often by adding endings such as *–ing* (*am marry**ing***) or *–ed* (*have marri**ed***), respectively. When *do* is used as a helping verb, the main verb is used in its unaltered, or base, form—*do marry*.

The Modal Auxiliaries

In contrast to the varying forms of *be, have* and *do,* the ten helping verbs known as the *modal auxiliaries,* or *modals,* do not change form to match their subjects. In addition, the verbs that they 'help' do not change form when combined with the modals into verb phrases. The modal auxiliaries are used to express shades of meaning about possibility, willingness and necessity. These meanings are explored further in the following table, which revisits Antonio's relationship with Griselda.

Modal	Example	Meaning
may	I *may marry* her.	*May* refers to permission or possibility. Antonio is allowed to marry Griselda, and there is a good chance that he will.
might	I *might marry* her.	*Might* refers to possibility. Here, Antonio's marrying Griselda is possible but not likely.
must	I *must marry* her.	*Must* refers to necessity. Due to some circumstance, perhaps because he made a promise to his dying mother, Antonio definitely has to marry Griselda.
can	I *can marry* her.	*Can* refers to present ability. In this case, neither Antonio nor Griselda is married, and they are old enough to marry; therefore, their marriage is able to occur but not planned.
could	I *could marry* her.	*Could* refers to conditional ability or permission. Antonio would be able or allowed to marry Griselda if circumstances were right. For instance, he could marry her if he weren't already married to Nina.
shall	I *shall marry* her.	*Shall* refers to polite intent. Here, Antonio is planning to marry his girlfriend in the future, and he is letting you know in a refined manner.
should	I *should marry* her.	*Should* refers to obligation. Here, Antonio would be doing the right thing if he married Griselda because she is delightful and they have been dating for so long.
will	I *will marry* her.	*Will* refers to future intent. In this case, Antonio is certain that he is going to marry her in the future.
would	I *would marry* her.	*Would* refers to conditional willingness. Antonio would be willing to marry Griselda under certain conditions—if, perhaps, her mother became less irritating.
ought to	I *ought to marry* her.	*Ought to* means that an act is the right thing to do. Here, Antonio would be making the right choice if he married Griselda.

Think About It

- What shades of meaning involving time, emphasis, possibility, willingness and necessity do you need to add to your writing?

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- What helping verbs—including the forms of *be, have* and *do* or the modal auxiliaries—can you use in your verb phrases to express those complex meanings?
- What changes must you make to the forms of your helping and main verbs to construct these verb phrases?

Remember that, when you form a verb phrase, your choice of helping verb is crucial to your meaning. As in Antonio's case, selecting the right (or wrong) helping verb could have an effect as grave as committing to a marriage or leaving poor Griselda single and frustrated for years to come.

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Infinitives
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 13

Mark Twain once wrote, 'It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt'. This passage contains infinitives: *to keep . . . and let* and *to open . . . and remove*. The infinitive . . . it means unending, right? In the mathematical sense, yes, it does, but in the grammatical sense, the meaning is quite different.

Defining Infinitives

An infinitive is the *to* form of a verb (*to ride, to grin, to benefit*). It can function in several ways: as a noun, adjective or an adverb. When it acts as a noun, it can be the subject of a sentence, the direct object or the subject complement, as in the following examples:

- Subject: ***To reduce*** *poverty is the organisation's main objective.*
- Direct Object: *The university plans* ***to offer*** *more evening courses.*
- Subject Complement: *Her desire is* ***to dance***.
- Adjective: *She lost the will* ***to survive.***
- Adverb: *Joe must run* ***to win****.*

Use infinitives to show intent, desires or expectations that take place at the same time or later than the actions of the main verb.

- Intent: *Jenny was working as a nurse, but she resigned* ***to stay*** *at home with her children*.
- Desire: ***To raise*** *a healthy, well-adjusted child is a parent's main wish.*
- Expectation: *Only after being on the lake did Sam want* ***to buy*** *a boat for less than $400*.

Be careful to distinguish between an infinitive (to and the base verb form) and a prepositional phrase (to and a noun or pronoun).

- Infinitive Phrase (verbs): *to jump, to laugh, to spring, to rush*
- Prepositional Phrase (nouns or pronouns): *to the garden, to class, to her, to them*

Infinitive Phrases

An infinitive phrase is the infinitive and its modifiers (words like adjectives and adverbs that help describe the infinitive). The modifiers help to create a phrase that can be used anywhere you would normally place a noun (direct object, subject, subject complement), adjective or adverb.

- Direct Object: *The project manager needed* ***to submit the report early***.
  - *To submit the report early* is the direct object of the verb needed.
  - *To submit* is the infinitive that functions as a direct object.
  - *Early* is the adverb describing **when** to submit.

  - *The report* describes **what**—the direct object of the verb *to submit.*
- Subject: ***To understand the story*** *takes some time and dedication.*
- Adjective: *The project manager wanted the group* ***to rehearse the presentation*****.**
- Adverb: ***To build a relationship***, *two people must spend much time together.*

Punctuation

If the infinitive is used as an adverb and is the beginning phrase in a sentence, set it off with a comma; otherwise, no punctuation is needed for an infinitive phrase. Consider the commas that set off these infinitive phrases:

- *To determine a correct diagnosis, the physician requested a blood test.*
- *To pass the exam, students must study for several hours.*

However, with the infinitive phrase at the end, no comma is needed: *Students must study for several hours to pass the exam.* Similarly, if the infinitive acts as the subject, a comma isn't used: *To understand the story takes some time and dedication.*

Bare Infinitives

The bare infinitive does not include the *to.* Many people cite this form when they identify a verb, as in 'This is the verb *to shout*', although *to* is not part of the verb:

- To- infinitive: *Help me* ***to save*** *the bear*.
- Bare infinitive: *Help me* ***save*** *the bear*.

Bare infinitives are used after modals, such as *shall, should, will, would, may, might, must, do, did, can, could* and sometimes *need:*

- *I can* ***stay*** *overnight with my friends*.
- *Mary will* ***take*** *the test after class*.
- *Greg would* ***stay****, but he has chores to do*.

Bare infinitives are also used after *had better* and *would rather:*

- *He had better* ***run*** *before the wolf catches his heels.*
- *Jenny would rather* ***dance*** *than sing.*

Some other examples include

- *We saw them* ***wave*** *to the crowd.*
- *My daughter's poem made me* ***cry****.*
- *Why* ***run*** *when you can drive*?

Split Infinitives

Split infinitives occur when words are included between *to* and the verb in an infinitive. Many readers don't mind if a single adverb splits the infinitive, but it's still best to avoiding splitting infinitives in formal writing.

- Informal: *I like* ***to*** *on a nice day* ***walk*** *in the woods.* (Too many words separate *to* and *walk*.)
  Formal: *On a nice day, I like* ***to walk*** *in the woods*.
- Informal: *I needed* ***to*** *quickly* ***gather*** *my personal possessions.* (A single adverb splits the infinitive.)
  Formal: *I needed* ***to gather*** *my personal possessions quickly.*

Think About It

- Which verbs might be revised to become infinitives?
- When are commas needed after infinitive phrases that begin sentences?

- What spots would benefit from using bare infinitives?
- Where do you have split infinitives to revise?

In infinitive is the word *to* and the base form of a verb that functions as a noun (subject, direct object, subject complement) or as an adjective or adverb. Infinitives can appear without *to* or as infinitive phrases, and they should not be split in formal writing.

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Participles
Chapter 5, Section 2: Lesson 14

Adjectives and verbs are taught as separate parts of speech, but they actually have a symbiotic relationship. A participle, for instance, is an adjective made from a verb. While verbs signify actions and states of being, participles describe nouns and pronouns. There are two kinds of participles—*present* (often called *active*) *participles* and *past* (often called *passive*) *participles.* These adjectives can be single words—*participles*—or multi-word phrases—*participial phrases.*

Present Participles

Present participles start with the base form of a verb. You can think of the base form as the verb in its simplest form, or the word you would find if you looked up the verb in the dictionary. For example, the base form of the verb *to be* is *be*, of *to break* is *break*.

Present participles are formed by adding *-ing* to the base form of the verb. The present participle of the verb *to work* is *working*; the present participle of the verb *to lose* is *losing*.

Like all adjectives, the present participle describes a noun or pronoun. The present participle is used when the noun or pronoun is doing or being something:

- *the **running** man*
- *an **exciting** movie*
- *a **discouraging** report*

The active participle is sometimes called the *present participle* when it is used with the verb *to be*:

- *She **was screaming** with excitement.*
- *We **are hurtling** toward destruction.*
- *My basset **will be foraging** for breakfast at dawn.*

In these constructions, the participle describes the subject of the clause—which is, of course, a noun or pronoun. In the third example above, *foraging* is the participle that describes *basset*. Using present participles with the verb *to be* is sometimes referred to as the progressive verb tense. (Present participles must not be confused with **gerunds**, which are also formed by adding *-ing* to the verb's base form. Gerunds function as **nouns**, not adjectives. In the sentence *The man loves running*, the gerund *running* is a noun, the direct object of the verb *loves*. In *The foraging basset hound loves eating*, *foraging* is a participle, while *eating* is a gerund.)

Past Participles

Regular past participles are formed by adding *-ed* to the base form of regular verbs. If you don't know the past participle of an irregular verb, you can look it up in a good dictionary, which will list the present and past forms of the verb as well as the past participle. For example, the past tense of the

irregular verb *to do* is *did*, while its past participle is *done.* (Of course, its present participle is *doing,* formed by adding *-ing* to its base form, but no such strategy will reveal its past participle.) Like all participles, the past participle describes a noun or pronoun. The past participle is used when the noun or pronoun is being acted upon in some way:

- *the **exhausted** man*
- *the **excited** audience*
- *a **discouraged** reporter*

In the above examples, something or someone has exhausted the man, excited the audience and discouraged the reporter. Always keep in mind that the active/passive distinction is huge: Any performer would love to be ***electrifying*** (active); no performer wants to be ***electrified*** (passive). When the past participle is used with the verb *to be*, the result is the passive voice:

- *Milk **was sponged** off the countertop.*
- *We **are doomed.***
- *At dawn, a box of dog biscuits **will be consumed.***

Participles in Sentence Structure

Like other adjectives, participles usually precede the noun or pronoun they modify:

- *the **blossoming** flower*
- *the **freezing** cold*
- *the **melted** popsicle*

But if the present participle takes a direct object (which it can do, since it's made from a verb) or if the present or past participle is part of a verbal phrase, it should be placed *after* the noun or pronoun it modifies:

- *All adults **carrying small children** should exit first.*
- *The flower **blossoming in spring** should be snipped in early morning.*
- *A small dog **frightened by fireworks** ran out into the street.*

Or if it precedes the noun or pronoun it modifies, the participle should be set off by a comma:

- ***Carrying their small children**, a few adults quickly exited the plane.*
- ***Blossoming in early spring**, the crocus is always a welcome sight.*
- ***Concerned about the welfare of my horse**, I called my local fire department.*

Think About It

- Which noun or pronoun will your participle describe?
- How can knowing the base form of the verb help you form participles correctly?
- If the verb is irregular, what is its past participle?
- Where will you place that participle or participial phrase in your sentence?

Participles enable you to use verbs—words denoting acting and being—as adjectives, thus enlivening your language and enriching your powers of description.

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Chapter 5, Section 3: Mechanics

End Punctuation
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 1

What if writers didn't use full stops, question marks or exclamation marks? While it might sound nice to save a few keystrokes, written sentences without end punctuation wouldn't communicate your ideas clearly. Try this sentence: *You wrecked the car*

It's hard to know how to interpret the sentence without punctuation. Now try it again:

- *You wrecked the car?* (Really—that was you?)
- *You wrecked the car!* (I can't believe it—this is terrible!)
- *You wrecked the car.* (Yes, I saw you do it.)

Despite the prevalence of the interrobang (?!), there really are only three options for ending your sentences in academic writing: question mark (?), exclamation mark (!) and full stop (.) Using these marks shows readers that your sentences are complete and helps them interpret your meaning

Standard End Punctuation
A **full stop** indicates the ending of a statement. A **question mark** shows that the sentence is a question (or an interrogative), not a statement. An **exclamation mark** is used for an expression mixed with strong emotion. Check out all three:

- *All the movies ended at the same time?*
- *All the movies ended at the same time!*
- *All the movies ended at the same time.*

Each form of end punctuation changes the meaning of the sentence. In the first sentence, the speaker is questioning or indicating disbelief. In the second sentence, the speaker is showing strong emotions—perhaps surprise or anger. In the final sentence, the speaker is simply making a statement. The best way for readers to know which of these meanings you're trying to communicate is to tell them through your choice of end punctuation.

End Punctuation With Quotation Marks
When quoting phrases that do not need end-of-sentence in-text references or when using dialogue, you will find that sometimes the end of a sentence also includes quotation marks. Most of the time, end punctuation appears outside the quotation mark:

- *Mum always says something wise, like 'Time will tell'.*
- *The shovel salesperson said gravely, 'Winter is coming'.*
- *Did you read the letter in which King wrote, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'?*

However, if a sentence stands entirely alone, as it might in an interview or transcript, the end punctuation appears *inside* the quotation marks. Likewise, it's common to include quotation marks in dialogue written for creative pieces, but you should check with your lecturer to be certain:

- *SALESPERSON: 'Winter is coming.'*
- *'Do you believe in extra-terrestrials?'*

End Punctuation With Brackets
When you use brackets to enclose references or add extra material to your sentence, the placement of end punctuation depends on the context. In-text citations that appear at ends of sentences always come before the full stop, not after:

- *The study found that 38% of participants were very unhappy with the service (Jones, 2014).*

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You may also include brackets to show that details have been added to further explain something within the sentence:

- *The scientific expedition ended when it encountered militant members of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF).*

In less formal writing, you may see a full sentence within brackets:

- *My mother (she's my hero) taught me not to complain.*
- *My mother (do I sound like her?) taught me not to complain.*

Notice that a full stop is not included mid-sentence, but a question mark or exclamation mark would be.

Other Sentence Endings

Very rarely, and mostly in creative writing, you might end sentences other ways to show specific things. Here's an exchange between two characters in a story:

- *'I wonder . . . '* (The ellipsis [three full stops] shows the speaker is pausing, thinking or perhaps confused.)
- *'Do you think—'* (The dash indicates that the speaker has been cut off mid-sentence.)

Note: These are extremely rare cases of end punctuation; use them only in creative and/or informal writing, and rarely even then.

End Punctuation Mistakes

One common mistake is overuse of the exclamation mark. Consider this note from a supervisor to employees:

- *The stapler is missing again! If you have seen the stapler, please return it!*

Readers often perceive the exclamation mark as yelling, and if overused, it certainly comes across that way. Use exclamation marks exceedingly sparingly—reserving them mostly for stories. A second common mistake is the question that's not really a question. It looks like this:

- *I wonder if aliens really built the pyramids?*

Some writers get confused by *wonder* and assume that this is a question. Although it could be reworded as a question (*Did aliens really build the pyramids?*), it is currently a statement and should receive a full stop for end punctuation: *I wonder if aliens really built the pyramids.* Here's another example:

- *The explorer asked if the person he'd met was named Livingston.*

The sentence is about someone asking a question, but it's still not actually a question; therefore, the full stop is correct.

Think About It

- Check for sentences missing end punctuation; what do you need to add?
- Where do you see sentences that are really questions and need to end with question marks?
- If you used exclamation marks, which ones are unnecessary?

End punctuation isn't optional in academic writing. You might leave out the full stops when sending a text, but university writing requires precision, and end punctuation helps ensure it (and even your texts benefit from end punctuation).

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Colons
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 2

Far from just being the first part of a smiley face :), a **colon** is a punctuation mark that helps writers present explanations, showcase examples or separate elements in some way. However, the colon most often is misused or misunderstood when it comes to sentence development. Essentially, a colon is a visual cue to the reader that *what follows the colon is significant.* For example, you might want to provide a definition of an idea:

- *Her new phone had 32 gigabytes of data storage**:** a capacity roughly equivalent to 32 billion bytes.*

A colon tells readers what follows it will be an explanation, clarification, definition or emphasis. Essentially, the colon says, 'Hey, there's important information coming!'

Ways You Can Use a Colon
Creating Lists
A colon can help you present a list or series of ideas:

- *Before you venture out into the storm, you're going to need several things**:** a waterproof poncho, an umbrella, rubber boots, a flashlight and some rope.*

Clarifying and Defining
A colon can also serve as a visual cue for a definition or clarification of an idea:

- *The storm was identified on Doppler radar**:** a device that uses radio waves to identify weather conditions.*

Quoting Independent Clauses
If you want to present a quotation that's an independent clause (complete sentence), you can opt to use the colon to introduce the quotation:

- *A Buddhist proverb explains the importance of preparedness and timing**:** 'When the student is ready, the teacher will appear'.*

Emphasising or Summarising Points
A colon can also be used to show emphasis or summary in the idea that follows it:

- *There is only one way to respond to that**:** yikes!*
- *I want you to know this: you're not going to get away with everything.*

How to Know When to Use a Colon (or Not)
One generally safe way to use a colon is if you're going to create a list or series of ideas and the clause that comes *before* the colon is an independent clause. Consider this example:

- ***There are several issues pertaining to classroom management:** the extent of professionalism of policy in the contexts of voice, dress and style; the consistency of teacher follow-through from the beginning of the school year to the end; and the depth and breadth of administrative support, including ISS and OSS protocol.*

The information in **bold** (before the colon) could stand alone as a sentence, so it's independent. The addition of the list of ideas provides clarification of what the writer means by *several issues*. Using a colon (or not) can reflect stylistic choices, depending on the kind of writing you're doing. In an academic paper, for example, the colon is generally a better choice than an em dash (—), although the two accomplish the same task. Compare these examples:

*Students use many forms of social media**:** Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and Facebook.*	In a research paper, the use of a colon is more appropriate as it's a more formal form of punctuation.
My students use many social networking apps — simple, user-friendly ways to talk to friends and meet people.	An em dash provides the same clarification of ideas here, but it is more informal and would most likely work better on a blog post or personal reflection type of paper.
*Students use many social networking applications**, which are** simple, user-friendly and fun.*	If the list is easy to follow, a colon may not be necessary at all and should not be used if the wording already indicates that the list will modify something (as 'which are' does).

More Ways to Use a Colon

The examples above are focused on how to use colons in sentence structures, but you can also use them in different ways when writing papers. Here are just a few colon uses that you may encounter.

Presenting Time
You may not have noticed that a colon is part of telling time, as in, *It's 5:00.*

Separating Titles and Subtitles
Avengers: Age of Ultron
Neil Postman: American Educator, Media Theorist and Social Critic

Writing Lines of Dialogue in a Play
CARRIE: Oh, my gosh! I'm so excited!!
MRS SMITH: What? What?!
CARRIE: I got an A on my physics final!

Think About It

- How do my ideas relate to one another?
- What role or function does my colon have (clarifying, emphasising, presenting a list or quotation)?
- What is the general tone and purpose for my writing?
- How will I need to use a colon if I'm referencing sources?

These questions will help you decide whether a colon is the best choice for your sentence, title or reference.

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Semicolons
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 3

One punctuation mark that can sometimes be confusing is the *semicolon*. It's helpful to think of it as a tough punctuation mark that is strong enough to *hold two complete thoughts together* or to *separate long or complicated items in a list.*

Connecting Ideas

Joining ideas to show how they connect or relate to each other is an effective way to show relationships. A semicolon can carry the weight of two ideas held in separate independent clauses. For example

- *Marcel's boss was unethical**;** she would make him work extra shifts without pay.*

Here, the writer wanted to show a close relationship between these two ideas:

- *Marcel's boss was unethical*
- *she would make him work extra shifts without pay*

Notice that each idea is an independent clause stating a complete idea. The writer could say,

- *Marcel's boss was unethical**.** She would make him work extra shifts without pay.*

By separating the two thoughts with a full stop, the writer has added a bit of distance between them. Connecting the statements with a semicolon bridges that distance and makes the ideas seem closer. If you want the reader to see the connection you see, use a semicolon to make that happen.

Separating Ideas

Semicolons can also help separate a long list of ideas within a single statement. Here's an example:

> *Students decide to pursue a medical career for various reasons, including the consistent field base, which is hard to find in other careers; the potential for advancement, with or without on-going education; a salary commensurate with duties and responsibilities—equally hard to find; and the satisfaction of being able to help others in need.*

That's a pretty long list of ideas, many with commas or dashes of their own setting apart additional detail. The semicolon separates those ideas by creating a brief stop between each item, and it's especially useful in helping the reader distinguish what all of those commas and dashes go with.

Using a Semicolon Correctly

If you're joining sentences, put your semicolon to a balancing test. Your goal is to make sure that you have an independent clause on each side of the semicolon, like this:

- *independent clause*; *independent clause*

Let's see how it works with this example:

- *Although the new techniques are promising**;** it is important to remember the tried-and-true methods of alleviating pain.*

In this example, *Although the new techniques are promising* is NOT an independent clause. It's a dependent clause; it wouldn't make sense all by itself. However, *it is important to remember the tried-and-true methods of alleviating pain* is an independent clause. Because the two clauses are different, the semicolon can't be used to balance the ideas. Instead, you need to either revise to be sure both sides of the semicolon are independent clauses or avoid using a semicolon. Here are two possibilities:

- ***Semicolon:*** *Although the new techniques are promising, they are not always as successful as the old; it is important to remember the tried-and-true methods of alleviating pain.*
- ***No semicolon:*** *Although the new techniques are promising, it is important to remember the tried-and-true methods of alleviating pain.*

You can also avoid mistaken identity. Sometimes, writers confuse the colon (**:**) and the semicolon (**;**), especially when developing a list. Either a colon or a signal term (*like, for example, such as*) can introduce a list, but a semicolon cannot. A colon works without signal terms, as in this example:

- *John asked us to pick up the following items: lemon syrup, syrup of ipecac and rose water.*

Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs

Semicolons effectively combine sentences when used with a conjunctive adverb or transition that clearly expresses the relationship between two ideas. While these transitional words are not necessary for a semicolon to perform this function, they do often make the relationship between the ideas clearer. These transitional words can express relationships such as *contrast, cause/effect,* and *addition*. For example:

- **Contrast:** *My friend loves to go to karaoke;* ***however****, he can't carry a tune.*
- **Cause/Effect:** *Everyone is a target for advertisers;* ***therefore****, it's important to understand the rhetorical appeals.*
- **Addition:** *The study indicates the medicine is a success;* ***furthermore****, subjects had few adverse reactions to it.*

Think About It

- Where will a semicolon help indicate a close relationship between two independent clauses?
- Where could you use a semicolon to separate complicated lists?
- Which clauses need a semicolon and conjunctive adverb to connect them?

Your answers to these questions will help you best determine whether your usage of the semicolon is effective and purposeful.

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Commas
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 4

Writing without using commas is a bit like building a road without putting up street signs: People tend to get confused and lost without directions. Commas help readers by directing them—showing them how to read and when to pause and keeping ideas separate from one another. Just imagine a world with no commas: *I like cooking my family and my pets.*

Disturbing, right? Now try it with commas: *I like cooking, my family and my pets.*

Whew! That's better. While there are many scenarios in which commas are used, some situations are more common than others.

Separate Items in a Series

Use commas to separate words, phrases or clauses listed in a series. A comma should appear after each item, but one may be omitted before the conjunction that joins the final item: *I like using peanut butter, cookies and whipped cream to make milkshakes.*

Without commas, the list means something different: *I like using peanut butter cookies and whipped cream to make milkshakes.*

If a sentence could be confusing without a comma before the conjunction that joins the final item, as is the case with the sentence *I went to the restaurant with my parents, Diane and Jim*, you should include a comma before it. In this sentence, it's unclear if the parents are named Diane and Jim or if Diane and Jim are different individuals. However, in the following sentence, it is clear: *I went to the restaurant with my parents, Diane, and Jim*.

These rules apply not just to lists of words but also to lists of phrases and clauses: *My parents hoped that I'd go to university, finish my degree and get a good job.*

Note, if you have questions about comma use, check with your lecturer to determine their preferences. If you feel a sentence could be confusing without the comma before the conjunction, err on the side of caution and include it.

Join Complete Sentences Separated by Conjunctions

Some conjunctions are used to connect two complete sentences. These include *for, and, nor, but, or, yet* and *so*. When one of these conjunctions (called ***coordinating conjunctions***) connects two complete sentences, a comma is added before the conjunction, as in these examples:

- *Those circus performers are odd, but I do like kangaroos.*
- *I am scared of heights, so I will never join the circus.*

It is possible to join short, uncomplicated sentences with a coordinating conjunction alone (i.e., *Those circus performers are odd but I do like kangaroos* is a clear, grammatically correct sentence, too); however, placing a comma before the coordinating conjunction that joins independent clauses will *always* result in a clear merging of ideas.

Separate Introductory Elements from the Main Sentence

Words, phrases and clauses placed before the main clause of a sentence are known as *introductory elements*. Most often, these introductory elements tell when, where, why or how the action occurred. A comma shows readers that the introductory element has ended and the main sentence will follow:

- ***Finally****, the astronauts arrived at the moon base.* (The introductory word tells *when.)*
- ***In the morning****, the writers drank coffee.* (The introductory phrase tells when.*)*
- ***Because she had little sleep last night****, she is churlish today.* (The introductory clause tells *why*.)

Without the comma, the introductory part and main sentence can run together and become confusing: *Next to the moon base headquarters was set up.*

Now try it again with a comma after the introductory element: *Next to the moon base, headquarters was set up.*

Often, writers struggle to decide where to add the comma when the introductory element is a longer phrase or clause. This sentence includes a comma in the correct spot: *Although life on the moon is difficult, it's better than living in fear all the time.*

And here's the same sentence with the comma placed **incorrectly:** *Although, life on the moon is difficult it's better than living in fear all the time.*

Avoid this error by waiting until the end of the introductory element to add a comma.

Separate Nonessential Parts from Essential Parts

Groups of words that aren't necessary for a complete sentence are known as *nonessential* (or *nonrestrictive*) elements. Generally, these nonessential elements provide additional description of nouns and pronouns:

- *The patient felt better after his surgery,* ***a new procedure not approved by the FDA****.*
- *The surgery,* ***which lasted three hours****, was a success.*
- *The woman at the pharmacy,* ***a registered nurse****, warned about taking medicine from strangers.*

In these sentences, the bold-faced parts provide additional information, but these parts are not essential to create grammatically complete sentences. You could remove them, and you would still

have complete sentences; plus, the meaning is still pretty clear. Because of this, the commas are needed to show that the elements are not essential.

Sometimes, a particular word can suggest whether a group of words is nonessential or essential. Usually, the word *which* is used to begin a group of words not essential to understanding a sentence: *The phone, **which had a shrill tone**, rang incessantly*.

The nonessential phrase is introduced by *which,* so commas *are* needed.

The word *that* is used with a phrase or clause absolutely essential to understanding the meaning of a sentence: *The phone **that connected her home office to her company's headquarters** rang incessantly.*

The essential phrase is introduced by *that,* so *no* commas are needed. Without the underlined information, we don't know that a particular phone is ringing.

Separate Coordinate Adjectives

When two adjectives describe the same noun and are placed next to each other, commas separate them:

- *The hot, smoky room absolutely took my breath away.*
- *She was an enthusiastic, energetic moderator.*

But sometimes, back-to-back adjectives are not coordinate adjectives, meaning they don't describe the noun that follows equally:

- *The tall oak tree.* (*Tall* describes *oak tree*, not just *tree.*)
- *My little lost puppy.* (*Little* describes *lost puppy*, not just *puppy*.)

Fortunately, you can use a trick to determine if a comma is needed between two adjectives. If you can replace the comma with *and*, the comma is necessary:

- *The hot and smoky room*
- But **not** *the tall and oak tree*

Commas With Dialogue

If you've written a short story or narrative, you already know dialogue requires that you pay close attention to punctuation. Consider this brief exchange between two characters in a story:

'Do you know what I've just found out, Holmes?' said Watson.
'No, but I suppose you'll tell me anyway,' replied Holmes.
'I've discovered,' answered the doctor, 'that we are international sensations!'
Sherlock thought for a moment and responded, 'Very nice. Now pass me that bottle, Watson.'

As you've noticed, a comma marks the boundaries between narration and dialogue, unless a question mark or exclamation mark is used, such as in the first sentence.

Common Errors

One common mistake writers make with commas is the comma splice—when two complete sentences are joined by only a comma, like this: *The hippopotamus swam to the shore nearby, the tourists became nervous.*

Commas by themselves cannot join two complete sentences. You can fix comma splices several ways:

- Add a full stop to create a hard break: *The hippopotamus swam to the shore nearby. The tourists became nervous.*
- Add a semicolon to keep the ideas connected: *The hippopotamus swam to the shore nearby; the tourists became nervous.*

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- Add a conjunction to join the ideas even more closely: *The hippopotamus swam to the shore nearby, so the tourists became nervous.*

Another common mistake is adding a comma between the subject and main verb of a sentence. Unless you're setting apart a nonessential element, a comma shouldn't split the subject and verb. Let's look:

- Incorrect: *My mother, screamed when she saw the big spider.*
- Correct: *My mother screamed when she saw the big spider.*
- Correct: *My mother, who always feared bugs, screamed when she saw the spider.*

Think About It

- Where in your essay have you used introductory elements that need to be separated from the main sentences by commas?
- Look for coordinating conjunctions; where are you using them to separate sentences or lists?
- Looking at your essay, which other comma rules will help with revision?

Commas make your writing easier for readers to understand. While it can be frustrating to learn the many rules, the results are clearer writing and a stronger message.

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Apostrophes
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 5

Did you know that the space shuttle Challenger exploded because of the faulty design of an o-ring? A small part caused the undoing of such a massive piece of machinery. Similarly, apostrophes, though tiny, can cause writers a ton of trouble. Part of the issue is their multiple uses—apostrophes are used both in contractions (*They're here*) and to show possession or ownership (*The brother's car is red*).

Apostrophes in Contractions

Contractions are those shortened words that you use all the time in speaking, but which you are discouraged from using in formal writing.

- *What's up?* (*What is up?*)
- *How's it going?* (*How is it going?*)
- *I've seen three Volkswagen Beetles today!* (*I have seen three Volkswagen Beetles today!*)

Other common contractions include the following: *don't* (*do not*)*, aren't* (*are not*)*, can't* (*cannot*)*, it's* (*it is*) *and I'm* (*I am*)*.*

Remember that you should avoid contractions in formal writing assignments, though they are acceptable in creative writing and, if your lecturer permits it, in reflective writing.

Apostrophes Showing Possession

Apostrophes also help show possession or ownership, indicating when a person, place or thing possesses or owns another.

- *The man's shovel* (*The man owns the shovel.*)
- *Canada's border* (*Canada has a border.*)
- *The driver's keys* (*The driver possesses the keys.*)

Notice all these nouns (*man*, *Canada* and *driver*) are singular. With a singular possessive word, the apostrophe is added before an *–s.* You can also show possession with plural words.

- *The boys' bikes* (*Several boys possess bikes.*)
- *States' laws* (*Many states have laws.*)
- *The drivers' keys* (*There are lots of drivers, and they all have keys.*)

With these examples, the plural word is written, and an apostrophe is added afterward. But what if a word is plural but doesn't end in *–s*, such as *children, women* or *people*?

- *Children's toys*
- *Women's shoes*
- *People's hearts*

In each of these cases, the plural word is written, followed by an *–'s* to show possession. If you switch them to singular words, they look like this:

- *Child's toys*
- *Woman's shoes*
- *Person's heart*

The placement of the apostrophe depends completely on whether the word is singular or plural. Let's look more closely at how this placement can change the meaning of a sentence:

- *The **zombie's teeth** are sharp.* (This is singular possessive. There's just one zombie—you can handle this!)
- *The **zombies' teeth** are sharp.* (Now it's plural possessive. Many zombies—run!)

Sometimes, you need apostrophes with compound nouns, such as *mother-in-law* or *ambassador general*. The rules are the same:

- *My mother-in-law's minivan is parked in the driveway.*
- *The ambassador general's BMW is parked next to it.*

Apostrophes and Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns that need to be made possessive can confuse writers. Examples of indefinite pronouns include *anybody, nobody, someone, everyone* and *everything.*

The possessive forms are written this way: *anybody's, nobody's, someone's, everyone's* and *everything's.*

Please note that indefinite pronouns are often used in contractions too:

- *Someone's been here already.* (Someone has been here already.)
- *I just saw someone's footprints.* (The footprints belong to someone.)

Apostrophes and Collective Possession

Sometimes, you need to show that two people own the same thing. Let's say one chainsaw belongs to Shaun *and* Peter. You would write it these ways to show possession: *Shaun and Peter's chainsaw* or *Peter and Shaun's chainsaw.* But let's say Shaun and Peter both have their own chainsaws. Now it's written like this: *Shaun's and Peter's chainsaws.*

Common Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophes are **not** used to make words plural. Check out these common errors:

- Incorrect: *The 1980's had the best cartoons.*
- Correct: *The 1980s had the best cartoons.*

- Incorrect: *I got two B's on my report card.*
- Correct: *I got two Bs on my report card.*
- Incorrect: *I am selling DVD's and CD's.*
- Correct: *I am selling DVDs and CDs.*

Also, apostrophes are **not** used with personal pronouns. These include words like *yours, mine, ours, its, his, hers* and *theirs.* The words are already possessive, so the addition of an apostrophe is unnecessary. These examples show correct use of personal pronouns:

- *Is that **your** car?*
- *Yes, is that one* **yours**?
- *The cat is not in **its** cage.*
- *Did the drivers take **their** keys?*
- *No, **theirs** are on the table.*

Think About It

- What directions has your lecturer given about using contractions?
- Where have you used plural words that you might need to check for misplaced apostrophes?
- With each apostrophe you've used to show possession, ask yourself: Is this a singular or plural possessive?

Writers use apostrophes in just about every type of writing since possessive words and contractions are very common. Don't feel shy about coming back to review the rules; there are plenty to remember!

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Quotation Marks
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 6

You have probably seen people put air quotes around words to signal discomfort with something they are discussing, but when are quotes most commonly used? The short answer is that quotes are generally used to show readers where you're using the exact wording of another person or another source. Using quotation marks around outside sources helps you avoid being accused of plagiarism because they show readers that you're not appropriating someone else's language as your own.

Using Outside Sources

When you incorporate ideas from outside source material (books, articles you find online or in print publications, web pages and other printed material), you probably need to use quotation marks.

Quotation Marks for Direct Quotes

When you use another source's exact words in your own writing, use quotation marks to show that you are directly quoting that source:

- In a recent article in *Opening the Gate*, Sebastian Wilkies observed, 'Alternative medicine is quickly becoming more than a fad; it is offering treatment to individuals who had thought themselves beyond help'.

This direct quotation from the *Opening the Gate* article (note, this is a fictitious journal meant to illustrate the use of quotation marks) is indicated with a set of quotation marks, showing readers where the writer's words stop and the outside source's words begin. The quoted sentence begins with a capital letter because the quotation starts at the beginning of the quoted source's sentence. If the

quotation had consisted of only a selection that happened to start mid-sentence, the quotation would not begin with a capital letter:

- The article 'Treatment for the Untreatable' by Sebastian Wilkies explores the potential of alternative medicine. Wilkies describes alterative medicine as a way to assist 'individuals who had thought themselves beyond help'.

Quotation Marks for Titles
You should also use quotation marks for the title of a work that's part of a larger compilation:

- The article 'Treatment for the Untreatable' by Sebastian Wilkies explores the potential of alternative medicine.

Because the article 'Treatment for the Untreatable' is part of a larger compilation of articles found in *Opening the Gate*, it's placed in quotation marks. You would do the same with other sources found in more lengthy publications, like these:

- short story
- a song
- a poem
- a magazine article.

Quotation Marks for Irony
Rely on quotation marks when you use words ironically or with a great deal of reservation:

- According to some opponents of standardised tests, the 'failure' to include those tests in the curriculum has resulted in a decrease in the drop-out rate among senior secondary school students.

Because the writer is using *failure* to mean the opposite of what it actually does, quotation marks denote the ironic use of the word.

Punctuation Within or Around Quotation Marks

From commas to semicolons and colons to square brackets, various types of punctuation are placed differently alongside quotation marks.

Commas and full stops should usually go outside punctuation marks: Those who oppose alternative medicine frequently indicate there is a 'lack of reputable research'.

Semicolons and colons should go outside punctuation marks: Notable law scholars indicate, 'the importance of due process is without doubt': 'failure to provide appropriate and timely judgement undermines the justice system'.

Ellipses show where words have been left out of a quotation in an attempt to shorten it: The critic surmises that the protagonist is pitted against 'the whimsies of nature . . . and the unpredictable behaviour of the dictator's government' in the small island nation where the story is set.

Square brackets go inside quotation marks and indicate misspellings or misused language, or add context to the quotation:

- The author of the tract was adamant in his opposition: 'It [the mine] will ruin our fisheries, destroy our riparian habitat, and poison the gulf [of Fundy] with carcinogens'.
- The spokesperson for the public relations firm was convinced that the football game's officials had 'favered [sic] one team over the other, based on the final flurry of calls at the end of the game'.

Above, the word *sic* in brackets is Latin for *thus* or *so it is*; it indicates to readers that the writer has taken words exactly from the text (spelling error and all) without changing them.

Double quotes are used when you're including a quotation that has another quotation inside of it: Martin notes, 'A client may present with a number of delusions. He may come in and say to you, "I am the Queen of England". Regardless, you must treat all clients with respect and ensure they maintain their dignity'.

Quotation marks are NOT needed when you're using a word as itself or to mean itself. Instead, use italics: If you write *epistemology*, will readers understand what that means? Here, the word is being written as itself—it's not being used ironically. It's also not taken from another's text and being used in this one. Therefore, no quotation marks are needed.

Think About It

- What are your reasons for using quotation marks in your draft?
- How successful have you been in showing readers where you've used someone else's exact words?
- What punctuation have you used around quotation marks, and how have you formatted it?

Go back to your draft with these questions in mind; check your use of quotation marks throughout to make sure you're using them correctly and avoiding any instances of plagiarism.

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Hyphens and Brackets
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 7

Setting complex concepts or ideas apart from each other can make them easier to understand, but some concepts have to be spliced together in order to be fully understood. Two forms of punctuation—brackets and hyphens—can signal separating or splicing to readers. Brackets set ideas aside so that they can be considered independently of one another, and hyphens splice them together to be thought of all at once. The discussion below outlines some general, widely accepted guidelines for both hyphens and brackets.

Hyphens

Generally speaking, hyphens are used to connect two or more words or numbers to create a single idea. Hyphens are especially useful when creating adjectives. If a compound adjective you're writing can't be misread, though, you most likely don't need a hyphen. For example, concepts like *grade point average* are widely understood and don't generally create confusion, so they don't need to be hyphenated. Here, though, are some generally accepted guidelines for using hyphens:

Hyphenate two words being used as a single adjective (or a word describing a noun) if that adjective comes before the noun:

- ***Well-dressed*** *individuals typically do well at job interviews.*
- *The* ***under-performing*** *products typically don't sell well.*
- *It is a* ***crude-oil*** *processing refinery.*

Keep in mind, though, that when two words describing a noun come after it, they are *not* hyphenated:

- *Individuals who are* ***well dressed*** *do well at job interviews.*
- *Products that are* ***under performing*** *typically don't sell well.*

Hyphenate compound numbers:

- *The man, who was* ***thirty-seven*** *years old, did well even though the younger people didn't think he would.*

Use hyphens to avoid confusion:

- *He needs to* ***re-sign*** (vs. resign*) the documents so that people can see the mark is clearly his.*
- *There is so much to cook for the party that I need to* ***pre-fix*** (vs. prefix) *the entree this morning.*

Use hyphens with words that begin with the prefixes *ex-* (meaning former), *self-*, and *all-*.

- *ex-wife*
- *self-inflicted*
- *all-encompassing*

Also, use hyphens when the suffix *-elect* comes at the end of a word.

- *president-elect*

When you combine a prefix and a capitalised word, use a hyphen:

- *mid-October*
- *anti-United States*

Use a hyphen when you combine figures like dates with prefixes.

- *mid-1990s*

In addition, use a hyphen when you include a prefix that ends with the same letter the base word begins with:

- *anti-intellectual*

Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line, but only break the word between syllables. The word *individual* can be broken into the followingg syllables: *in-di-vid-u-al*. When you use it at the end of a line and need to break it up with a hyphen you might do the following:

- *The new laws compromise the worth and dignity of many of the hardworking in-*
  dividuals that are a part of the nation.

Finally, when dividing already hyphenated words, such as *meta-analysis*, because of a line break, divide the word at the hyphen only:

- *The book is so complex scholars provide analysis of its analysis. The meta-*
  analysis is hard for many readers to grasp.

Brackets

Brackets are typically used to include information that's helpful or interesting but isn't necessary to understand the sentence's meaning. There are widely accepted guidelines for using brackets in your writing. Brackets often include additional information, clarify a concept or otherwise share information that wouldn't fit into the flow of the sentence:

- *Her methodical work (she spent at least three hours on each spreadsheet) was enough to earn her a big raise at the end of the year.*

Additionally, you can include information that's an aside or otherwise not particularly relevant to the thought being expressed in the sentence:

- *George's letter (which was beautifully written, by the way) helped to get the group out of trouble with the school administration.*

You can also use brackets to separate letters or numbers from the rest of the sentence when listing out the steps of a process:

- *To change a car tire, follow these steps: (a) pull off the hubcap and loosen the lug nuts on the flat; (b) locate the tire jack in your vehicle and place it just behind or just in front of the flat tire; (c) jack the tire off the ground; (d) remove the loosened lug nuts and put them in the hub cap or someplace where they won't be lost or scattered; (e) remove the flat tire from the vehicle and put the spare in its place; and (f) tighten the lug nuts in an even fashion before replacing the hubcap and lowering the spare tire to the ground.*

Pearson

To punctuate writing inside brackets, use these guidelines:

- For statements written inside brackets (complete sentences that don't ask a question or aren't exclamations), the first letter shouldn't be capitalised, nor should there be end punctuation:
    - *What Brenda did (she found the car keys in that murky pool just by using her hands) was completely amazing.*
- For exclamations or questions inside brackets, capitalise the first letter and use appropriate end punctuation:
    - *When Jake showed up for the holiday (Did he call to say he was coming?), we were completely surprised.*
- If a sentence stands alone in brackets, the full stop for that sentence should go inside rather than outside of the brackets:
    - *The hurricane wind gusts clocked in at nearly 90 miles an hour. (The sustained winds topped out near 75 miles an hour.) Thus, windows shattered and the fast-moving air stripped shingles and siding off of the buildings on our block.*

Think About It

- Where could a hyphen prevent confusion or misreading of your ideas?
- What prefixes, if any, have you used, and what hyphen guideline above might apply?
- Where should a hyphen be if you need to break apart a word in the middle of a line?
- Where can you set off information with brackets to make your ideas clearer?
- What should you write inside brackets, and how should you punctuate it?

With these questions in mind, check your writing for different places where you may need to use or delete hyphens or brackets based on these guidelines.

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Capitalisation
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 8

To capitalise or not to capitalise . . . that is the question. When you capitalise and what you capitalise depends on grammar conventions and your own stylistic choices. In less formal writing, like poems, text messages, personal letters or ads, you might choose to flaunt known conventions by ignoring capitalisation standards or by capitalising certain letters to draw attention to a particular WORD or phrase. In formal writing, including academic assignments or work-related correspondence, you should follow capitalisation conventions to help establish your credibility and membership within a community of writers—classmates, lecturers, colleagues and employers.

Capitalisation Conventions for Formal Writing Situations

You probably know to capitalise in the most common scenarios:

- The first word in a sentence: ***The*** *first letter of this sentence is capitalised*.
- The letter *I* when it's used as a pronoun: *The driver of the car thought* ***I*** *was turning left*.
- Proper nouns: *My best friend,* ***John Smith****, is going to see a movie at* ***Radio City Music Hall*** *in* ***New York City****.*

This last convention might be the most difficult to meet. That's because some nouns are considered proper in certain scenarios but not in others. Note the difference in the use of a capital or lowercase letter for the word *senator* and *mom* in the following examples:

- ***Senator Smith*** *was elected to office in November.*
- *The* ***senator*** *from Kansas will join the debate.*
- *I was embarrassed when* ***Mom*** *drug out my baby pictures to show my date.*

- *I know that **moms** are supposed to do things like that, but it's still so embarrassing.*

Typically, if a noun names a specific, unique or well-known person, place or thing, then it's labelled a proper noun and should be capitalised.

If you find yourself questioning whether or not to capitalise, the conventions below can help. Grammar handbooks and dictionaries are also helpful reference sources, so be sure to keep those close by.

Common Capitalisation Conventions for Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are typically organised into three categories: people, places and things. Decide which category fits the noun in question, and then refer to the examples below for guidance.

People

Capitalise personal/professional titles when used before a name.

- ***Aunt Jenny** can pick you up from work today.*
- ***Secretary Harrison** will address the public during his press conference today.*
- ***Mr Potter** works in the library.*
- ***Dr Finch** has an appointment available on Monday.*

As always, there are a few exceptions:

- Do not capitalise the title if it's followed by a comma: *The **chairman of the board**, John Carter, will introduce the speaker.*
- Do not capitalise a professional title if it's used after or instead of a name: ***The president** will arrive on Wednesday.*
- Do not capitalise a personal title on its own unless it's used in place of a name:
    - *I love **my dad**.*
    - *I love **you, Dad**.*

Also capitalise the names of God, specific deities and religious figures:

- *We thank **God** the **Father** for his many blessings.*
- *My yoga instructor bows to **Buddha** every morning.*
- *The sermon delivered by **Pope John Paul** was both funny and moving.*

However, don't capitalise the word *god* when used nonspecifically: *One **god** in Greek mythology that I admire is **Zeus**.*

Places

The names of planets, continents and countries are considered proper nouns:

- *Someday, astronauts will figure out how to land on **Mars**.*
- *During the summer, I will travel through **Europe** by train.*
- *My neighbour is from **Japan**.*

Names of other heavenly bodies are not: *The **moon** is full tonight.*

In addition, capitalise the names of geographical regions and territories:

- *Jessica goes to university in the **Northeast**.*
- *Homeowners in **Anne Arundel County** pay huge taxes for the top-rated schools.*

But not points of the compass: *Head **east** when you get to the river.*

Capitalise the names of streets, roads, man-made/natural structures and landmarks:

- *We live in the first cul-de-sac off of **Mulberry Road**.*
- *The **Great Wall of China** extends for miles.*
- *The **Grand Canyon** is more than just a big hole in the ground!*

Things

Capitalise specific languages, nationalities and races:

- *I wish I knew how to speak* ***Spanish*** *with more confidence.*
- *The first-grade teacher is* ***Lebanese****.*
- *My cousin is 30,* ***Caucasian****, single and university educated.*

The days of the week, the months of the year, and holidays should also be capitalised:

- *I work on* ***Mondays*** *and* ***Wednesdays****.*
- *His birthday falls in* ***January****.*
- *My favourite holiday is* ***Christmas****.*

An exception to this rule—don't capitalise seasons unless used in a title:

- *The best time to view the cherry blossoms is in the* ***spring****.*
- *I signed up for the* ***Fall*** *2016 term.*

Capitalise brand names, institutions, companies and organisations:

- *The* ***Gucci*** *purse sold for $400 at the consignment store.*
- *My son goes to business school at* ***Harvard University****.*
- ***Gap*** *and* ***Old Navy*** *will open in* ***May*** *at the local mall.*
- *The* ***Therapeutic Goods Administration*** *explored the effectiveness of the new asthma medication.*

Also capitalise well-known time periods and events:

- *Shakespeare was born during the* ***Elizabethan*** *era.*
- *My uncle served as a pilot in the* ***Second World War****.*

Finally, don't capitalise century numbers: *Many great novels were published during the* ***twentieth*** *century.*

Capitalise titles, quotations and other reference information according to a preferred reference style (i.e., Harvard, APA, Chicago/Turabian, MLA).

Think About It

- Where do you need to capitalise references to a particular or unique person, place or thing?
- What letters of titles should be capitalised?
- If the writing is informal, where and why could you intentionally break capitalisation rules?

Capitalisation is important because it helps readers differentiate proper nouns from other words in your text. Following common capitalisation conventions helps enhance your credibility as a writer.

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Spelling Strategies
Chapter 5, Section 3: Lesson 9

Getting spelling right the first time around is a challenge for many writers, especially because (as all writers know) English breaks rules that are supposed to be consistent. Correct spelling puts the polish on your writing. Here are some basic ideas about what to look for and how to address spelling issues.

Strategies and Tools for Polishing Your Writing

Spellcheck

The first step you can take is to use the spellchecker on your word-processing software. This will help with the basics, but it won't catch everything, including capitalisation errors. In spite of a spellchecker's limitations, it can 'learn' to recognize commonly used foreign words and unusual names.

It can also search for *homophones*, or words that are pronounced the same, have different meanings and may or may not be spelled the same (see below for more about homophones).

Dictionary
You can often start your reviews by using your spellcheck, but how do you know which word to choose? To choose the correct word, you will want to check a dictionary to determine which of the suggested words offer your intended meaning.

Mnemonics
Mnemonics are memory devices that help you remember something. For example, if you need to remember whether Elsie or Evelyn is older, you could use the fact that *L* comes before *V* in the alphabet to remember that Elsie is older. Check out these spelling-related examples as well:

- *Stationery* (the kind you write letters on) uses an *envelope* whereas *stationary* means not moving*.* The *e* in *envelope* may help you remember the correct spelling.
- The *principal* of the school is your *pal* (as opposed to a *principle*).
- *Affect* is an *action,* which is easy to remember because they both start with *a*. If you aren't describing an *action*, use effect.

Sounding It Out
Sounding out the spelling of words can be another tool, especially for words like *medicate (med-i-cate)* where sounds tend to blend. However, use this tool with care since not all words can be sounded out. For example, the word *gracious* is pronounced as if it should be spelled *gray-shus,* but you know that isn't right. When in doubt, always confirm your spelling with a dictionary.

Homophones
Homophones are also tricky. These are words that sound alike but are spelled differently. Consider this sentence, for instance: ***They're*** *certain* ***their*** *cars were parked over* ***there****.* This sentence includes three different words—homophones—which sound the same. Here are a few examples:

their (possessive form of *they*)	there (in that place)	they're (contraction of *they are*)
to (in the direction of)	too (in addition, excessive)	two (number between *one* and *three*)

whose (possessive form of *who*)	who's (contraction for *who is* or *who has*)
whether (introducing a choice)	weather (climatic conditions)
effect (a result; to cause to happen)	affect (an emotion; to have an influence)
accept (take or receive)	except (leave out)
you're (contraction of *you are*)	your (possessive form of *you*)
its (possessive form of *it*)	it's (contraction of *it is* or *it has*)

Spelling Rules
Everyone has broken a rule or preferred not to follow a rule at some point, but several common spelling rules are actually quite helpful:

'I' before 'E'
As a general rule, use *i* before *e* except after *c* or when pronounced 'ay' (as in *eight*). You may find exceptions to this rule, but it should provide you with a good starting point.

• *i* before *e*	achieve, brief, field, friend
• except after *c*	ceiling, receipt, perceive
• or when pronounced 'ay'	eight, neighbour, reign, weigh
• exceptions	either, foreign, height, leisure, neither, seize

Prefixes
A prefix does not change the spelling of the word it's attached to. For example, *misspelling* is often misspelled as *mispelled*, but all of the letters in both *mis* + *spelling* are needed.

Suffixes

A suffix may change the spelling of the word it's added to.

- Silent *e:* Drop the final silent *e* on a word when you add a suffix that starts with a vowel: *smile/smiling*. The initial *i* in *–ing* makes it necessary to drop the final *e* in *smile*. Keep the final *e* if the suffix starts with a consonant: *disgrace/disgraceful*.
- Final *y:* When you add a suffix to a word that ends in *y,* change the *y* to *i* if it is preceded by a consonant: *try/tried, busy/busily, fly/flies*. Because *r* is a consonant, the *y* in *try* changes to *i* in *tried*, and so on.
- The *-ible*/*-able* rule: If the root is not a complete word, use *-ible*: *audible, edible, incredible*. The root *aud* is not a full word, so *-ible* is used. If the root word is complete, use *-able*: *comfortable, defendable, searchable*. The root *comfort* is a full word, so *-able* is used.
- Final consonants: When adding a suffix to a word that ends in a vowel and a consonant, double the final consonant if the word contains only one syllable or ends in an accented syllable: *stop/stopping, begin/beginner, occur/occurrence*. *Stop* ends with the vowel + consonant combination, *op*, and is one syllable, so when adding the *–ing* suffix, the consonant *p* is doubled to make *stopping*. The same rule applies to *beginner* and *occurrence*.

Plurals

Most words form plurals with an *s.* For words ending in *s, ch, sh, x or z,* add *-es: bus/buses, church/churches, dish/dishes, box/boxes, quiz/quizzes.*

- Also, add *-s* to words ending in *o* if the *o* is preceded by a vowel: *patio/patios, zoo/zoos*.
- Add *-es* if the *o* is preceded by a consonant: *hero/heroes, veto/vetoes*.
- Exceptions to this rule include *memo/memos, piano/pianos, solo/solos*.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Sometimes, knowing which words you often have trouble with can you help avoid misspelling them. The columns below list some of the most commonly misspelled words:

accept/ed	believe/d/s	exercise/s/ing	occasion/s	successful/ly
affect/s	business/es	experience	occurred	therefore
against	cannot	final/ly	occurrences	through
a lot	categories	heroes	professor	truly
all right	definitely	immediate/ly	received/d/s	until
apparently	dependent	lose	roommate/s	where
argument/s	develop/s	may be	sense	whether
before	environment	necessary	separate	without
beginning	every day	noticeable	success	woman

After reading all of these strategies, you might find it helpful to begin an error list so you know what to look for as you revise. This particular list will be specific to spelling errors/words that give you the most trouble, perhaps including words from the list above. For example, remembering how to correctly spell *their/they're/there, receive* and *heroes* may be difficult. If you put these words on your list, you can focus on the strategies that work best for you to combat those particular errors, and you can check for them carefully as you proofread. As time passes, the words you list will probably change; the point is that an error list will be yours—specific to the words you need to address.

Think About it

- What are the most common spelling errors that challenge you?
- What strategies will help you catch those errors?
- What rules should you keep in mind to help you add prefixes and suffixes?

Using spellcheck software to determine spelling errors is just a start. Remember you can also use a dictionary, create mnemonics, sound out the word, check for homophones, review spelling rules (including those for commonly misspelled words) and create an error list. Choose the tools that work best for your writing process so you can polish your spelling!

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Chapter 5, Section 4: Sentence Structure

Independent and Dependent Clauses
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 1

You may be wondering what clauses are and why you need to know about them. Every sentence is made of one or more clauses. Knowing about the two main types of clauses can help you to write clear and complete sentences. A clause is a group of words that includes two parts:

- **A noun (subject)** tells the reader what the student is about. It's a person, place, thing or idea.
- **A verb (predicate)** tells the reader the action in the sentence or what the subject is doing.

Here are a couple of examples of clauses:

- *The board members voted to close the park.*
- *Tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*

In the first example, the subject is *board members*, and the verb is *voted.* In the second example, the subject is *tourists*, and the verb is *visited*. Both of these examples are **independent clauses**, but another type of clause is a **dependent clause**. Some guidelines for understanding and using clauses are described below.

Independent Clauses

As mentioned above, independent clauses have three characteristics. They must have a noun and a verb (or a subject and a predicate). They may also stand alone as a complete sentence. A simple sentence is one independent clause. In order to be a complete simple sentence, an independent clause must also have a sentence-closing punctuation mark, such as a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

You can also use a coordinating conjunction to combine two independent clauses to make a compound sentence. Coordinating conjunctions are easy to remember if you think of the word *FANBOYS*: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.* The following examples of compound sentences follow this pattern: independent clause, comma, coordinating conjunction, independent clause.

- *The board members voted to close the park, and tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*
- *The park was a popular destination, but the tourism was harmful to wildlife.*

In these examples, there is a comma before the coordinating conjunction, which is usually recommended when forming compound sentences. However, some writers omit the comma when the two independent clauses are both short or when the second clause begins with a pronoun that represents the first clause's subject. Please also note that, for each example, you could replace the comma and the coordinating conjunction with a full stop. (e.g., *The park was a popular destination. The tourism was harmful to wildlife.*)

Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses also have a noun (subject) and verb (predicate), but they cannot stand alone as complete sentences. Dependent clauses should always be combined with an independent clause. Using a dependent clause by itself creates a sentence fragment or incomplete sentence. There are three

main types of dependent clauses: **adverb clauses, adjective clauses** and **noun clauses.** The most common type of dependent clause is an adverb clause.

Adverb Clauses
Usually when people refer to a dependent clause, they are referring to an adverb clause. This main type of dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction. Some examples of common subordinating conjunctions include the following:

- *Although, after, before, because, if, since, until, unless, when, while.*

These types of conjunctions show the relationship between the dependent clause and the independent clause. Adding a dependent clause to an independent clause creates a complex sentence. Here are a few examples of sentences that have dependent clauses. The dependent clause can go before or after the independent clause. The dependent clause in each example **appears in bold.**

- Restaurants should reduce plastic waste **because it harms the environment.**
- **If customers need a straw or plastic fork**, they should ask for one.
- **Even if plastic is less expensive,** restaurants should use compostable containers.

In the first example, the dependent clause goes after the independent clause. No punctuation is needed because the dependent clause goes last. (Using a comma before *because* is unnecessary, and using a full stop before *because* would create a fragment.) In the second two examples, the dependent clause goes before the independent clause. When the dependent clause appears first, there should be a comma to show where it ends.

Adjective Clauses
This type of dependent clause begins with one of these words: *that, what, whatever, where, which, who, whoever, whom or whose*. (These types of words can begin other types of phrases and clauses, too.) Adjective clauses provide additional information about a noun in the main independent clause. Adjective clauses are usually next to the word or idea they describe. They may appear in the middle of an independent clause or after an independent clause. In the following examples, the **adjective clauses are in bold.**

- *A source of plastic pollution* ***that fewer people understand*** *is synthetic fabric.* (The adjective clause in bold modifies the noun *pollution.*)
- *Athletic clothing,* ***which has become increasingly popular,*** *is usually made of polyester.* (The adjective clause in bold modifies the noun *clothing.*)
- *The government passed a new law* ***that requires restaurants to use paper straws.*** (The adjective clause in bold modifies the noun *law.*)
- *A main source of tourism in Akumal is sea turtles,* ***which are declining in population.*** (The adjective clause in bold modifies the noun *turtles.*)

To punctuate adjective clauses, decide whether the information in the clause is necessary to the sentence. If it's necessary, it's an essential (restrictive) clause. If not, it's a nonessential (nonrestrictive) clause. An essential clause is necessary within the sentence, giving needed information about the noun it refers to. There are no commas or punctuation around it:

- *A source of plastic pollution* ***that fewer people understand*** *is synthetic fabric.*

The adjective clause in bold is essential to the main idea of the sentence. Therefore, it shouldn't have commas.

Nonessential clauses are different. They give information that may be interesting and useful, but they're not necessary for the sentence to make sense. Readers will understand the sentence with or without the nonessential clause, so set these clauses off from the main part of the sentence with commas as in these examples:

- *Athletic clothing,* ***which has become increasingly popular,*** *is usually made of polyester.*

- *A main source of tourism in Akumal is sea turtles,* ***which are declining in population.***

When a nonessential adjective clause appears in the middle of an independent clause, place a comma before and after it. When a nonessential adjective clause appears after an independent clause, place a comma before it.

Noun Clauses
When dependent clauses act as nouns, they are subjects or objects of their sentence. This means that structure of a sentence with a noun clause is different from the structure of a sentence with an adverb clause. The noun clause replaces a noun, so it's part of the independent clause. Noun clauses can start with question words such as *who, what, when, where* or *why.* They can also start with *whether, if* or *that* as well as words like *whatever, whoever* or *however.* Notice how the **noun clauses in bold** in these examples function as nouns.

- *Some consumers do not understand* ***why the laws are in place.*** (The bold words are the 'noun' that the consumers do not understand. This is the sentence's object.)
- *Even when good laws are in place, some consumers do* ***whatever they please.*** (The bold words are the 'thing' that consumers do. This is also the sentence's object.)
- *People often feel confused about* ***how to make a difference****.* (The bold words are the object of the preposition *about.*)

Noun clauses do not require commas, but it's important to remember that they cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

Think About It

- When might you combine independent clauses to make compound sentences?
- Why do dependent clauses need another complete clause to make sense?
- Which adjective clauses in your writing are essential versus nonessential?

Using a variety of clauses appropriately will enhance your writing.

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Sentence Types
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 2

Sentences are classified by structure and function—or by how they're put together and what their goals are. Understanding sentence types allows you to create more complex sentences and share your ideas in new ways.

Classifying Sentences by Structure

Just as a beautiful bridge spanning a river is created from smaller, purposeful parts, a sentence is classified by the parts used to write it. English sentences are separated into one of four structures: *simple*, *compound*, *complex* and *compound-complex*.

Simple Sentences
A simple sentence consists of a single independent clause. Here are a few very basic independent clauses:

- *The guitarist played.*
- *The guitarist played a slow ballad.*
- *The guitarist played a slow ballad in honour of his late father during the encore.*

Regardless of length, each one consists of a single independent clause, making them simple sentences.

Compound Sentences
A compound sentence consists of two or more *independent clauses* connected either by a semicolon or with a comma and coordinating conjunction such as *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.*

- *Toby wanted to become a doctor; he applied to medical school.*
- *Toby wanted to become a doctor, so he applied to medical school.*

Both of these sentences contain two independent clauses—*Toby wanted to become a doctor* and *he applied to medical school*. In the first sentence, these two clauses are connected with a semicolon, which shows that a relationship exists between the two but doesn't specify the nature of that relationship. In the second sentence, the clauses are connected with a comma and the coordinating conjunction *so*, which shows that a cause/effect relationship exists between the two parts. If both clauses are short or if the second clause's subject is a pronoun that represents the first clause's subject, it may be acceptable to omit the comma and to just use a coordinating conjunction. However, using a comma with the coordinating conjunction is still correct.

Complex Sentences
A complex sentence consists of one *independent clause* connected to one or more *dependent clauses*. Here are some dependent clauses to consider:

- *When nurses talk to patient*
- *Because sleep is important*

By themselves, they're fragments, leaving you wondering what the writer wanted to say next. Connected with independent clauses, they become complete sentences:

- ***When nurses talk to patients****, they should make eye contact and listen actively.*
- *Nurses should minimise late-night interruptions* ***because sleep is important.***

These are *complex sentences* because they each contain a dependent clause and an independent clause. You probably noticed that, when the dependent clause comes *before* the independent clause, a comma follows the dependent clause. When the dependent clause comes *after* the independent clause, no comma is needed.

Compound-Complex Sentences
All that remains now is to combine the last two types. A compound-complex sentence consists of two (or more) *independent clause(s)* and one (or more) *dependent clause(s)*:

- *Because sleep is important, nurses should minimise late-night interruptions, and hospitals should enforce quiet hours.*

This compound-complex sentence can be broken down into its parts:

- ***Because sleep is important,*** (dependent clause beginning with the subordinate word *because*)
- ***nurses should minimise late-night interruptions*** (independent clause)
- ***, and*** (comma and coordinating conjunction to connect two independent clauses)
- ***hospitals should enforce quiet hours.*** (independent clause)

The parts can easily be moved around as well:

- *Nurses should minimise late-night interruptions, and hospitals should enforce quiet hours because sleep is important.*

Now compare this compound-complex sentence with a string of simple sentences:

- *Nurses should minimise late-night interruptions. Hospitals should enforce quiet hours. Sleep is important.*

The compound-complex sentence sounds smooth while three simple sentences in a row sound choppy.

Classifying Sentences by Function

You have seen how to classify sentences by their parts; you can also classify them by their function—what they're trying to accomplish. English sentences are categorised into four basic functions: *declarative, interrogative, exclamatory* and *imperative*.

Declarative

A *declarative* sentence makes a statement. Most sentences are declarative:

- *Sleep helps patients heal faster.*
- *While patients are sleeping, their bodies can produce more white blood cells.*

Interrogative

An *interrogative* sentence is used to indicate a question. You have heard of police interrogating a suspect. The term *interrogative* comes from the same root word. This type of sentence requires a question mark:

- *How does sleep affect stress levels?*
- *How much coffee can a patient have?*

Exclamatory

Next, an *exclamatory* sentence is used for an expression filled with strong emotion. Like an interrogative sentence, an exclamatory sentence can be recognized by its end punctuation: the exclamation mark.

- *Hospitals should make sleep a top priority!*

Just beware of overusing exclamatory sentences. Exclamation marks lose their effect if they appear too often. They are rarely used in academic writing.

Imperative

Finally, an *imperative* sentence makes a request or a command. The end punctuation will be a full stop, just as in declarative sentences:

- *Review the new nutritional guidelines, and summarise your findings.*
- *Treat patients with respect and kindness.*

So what's the difference? In most imperative sentences, the implied subject is *you,* even though the word *you* isn't in the sentence! For example, *Treat patients with respect and kindness* is really the same as (*You) treat patients with respect and kindness.*

This is called the *understood you* because, even though the word isn't in the sentence, it's understood. If someone gives you a command, you know it's directed at you!

Imperative sentences are usually not appropriate for academic essays, but you might use them in workplace writing, such as memos. In academic essays, writers mostly choose declarative sentences, along with occasional interrogative sentences.

Think About It

- Where have you used several simple sentences that might be combined into a compound or complex sentence to avoid choppiness?
- Look for patterns of sentence structures in your essay—how can you add variety to your structures?

- What types of sentences do you write most? What might be overused?

Sentences are classified according to their structure and their function. In terms of structure, a sentence can be simple, compound, complex or compound-complex. In terms of function, a sentence can be declarative, interrogative, exclamatory or imperative. Knowing the differences allows you to write with greater complexity and creativity, fitting your words and message to the needs of your audience.

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Incomplete Sentences: Fragments
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 3

I'm sick of trying to fix this! Never again! While the frustration the writer feels is clear in both of these statements, the second is technically an incomplete sentence. Sometimes, an incomplete sentence, or fragment, can provide emphasis or effect, as it does in this example. Most of the time, though, fragments aren't acceptable in academic writing. They may happen if you're really rushed while writing or if you're confused about where to place a full stop. Fragments generally fall into one of three categories:

- Missing subjects
- Missing predicates
- Unsupported dependent clauses

Fragments Due to Missing Subjects

A complete sentence needs to contain a **subject**, which is the noun, pronoun or phrase that tells who or what the sentence is about. If a sentence is missing its subject, the main *who* or *what* the sentence is about will be unclear. Consider this example:

- *During the 1970s wore bell-bottomed pants and colourful shirts with wide lapels.*

Because there's no subject in this fragment, readers don't know who wore these items. However, in this example, there is a subject (in bold):

- *During the 1970s **most young men** wore bell-bottomed pants and colourful shirts with wide lapels.*

Fragments Due to Missing Predicates

A complete sentence also needs to contain a **predicate,** which is the word or words in a sentence that express the action or state of being of the subject. A predicate includes at least one verb, but other words may be included as well. If a fragment lacks a verb, the main action or state of the subject will be unclear:

- *On Friday nights, students at the drive-in movies and roller-discos.*

In this fragment, the verb is missing. You will notice that the next example makes a lot more sense because of the verb *gathered*:

- *On Friday nights, students **gathered** at the drive-in movies and roller-discos.*

This fragment needed an action verb. In addition to action verbs, a predicate can also have a verb of being:

- *Disco songs **were** popular, but rock-n-roll **was** more ubiquitous.*

If you find that your writing contains fragments that are missing a subject or a predicate, a good way to avoid them is by looking at each sentence closely. After you write a draft, identify the subject and the verb in each sentence. If you can't find either of these pieces, add the missing information.

Fragments Due to Unsupported Dependent Clauses

A complete sentence needs to contain at least one **independent clause**, which consists of a subject, a predicate and appropriate end punctuation. You can use another type of clause, called a **dependent clause**, in combination with an independent clause. A dependent clause has a subject and a verb, but it can't stand alone. It depends on an independent clause to be complete. Alone, a dependent clause sounds like this:

- *Because the price of gas has increased*
- *When people ride the bus*

These are both dependent clauses, but they need independent clauses to be complete:

- *Because the price of gas has increased, more people are riding the bus.*
- *When people ride the bus, they can read or use a smartphone.*

One way to find and fix these types of fragments is by reading your sentences in reverse order. For example, if you start by reading the last sentence of your paper and then work your way backward, the fragments will be more obvious because you will read any stand-alone dependent clauses by themselves, which will show that they're missing ideas and are incomplete. When you find a dependent clause by itself, try revising by either combining it with a nearby sentence or adding an independent clause to it.

In some cases, a fragment can be a phrase that's missing a subject or verb and could be combined with a nearby sentence. For instance, a writer can confuse a long phrase for a complete sentence if it has a lot of words:

- *After the long, stressful drive during peak hour.*

This is a fragment because it's really a series of prepositional phrases instead of a sentence. You might revise it like this:

- *After the long, stressful drive during peak hour, we took a detour.*

Think About It

- What types of fragments are most common in your writing?
- Which fragments need independent clauses to be complete?
- Which fragments are long phrases in disguise?

Consider these questions to help avoid writing fragments in future essays. Taking the time to fix fragments and to reflect on why fragments occur will be well worth the effort in the long run.

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Comma Splices and Run-ons
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 4

A common but avoidable error in academic writing is comma splices or run-on sentences. These errors cause ideas to run together for the reader. Knowing how to spot and revise these mistakes will help to ensure that your meaning is clear.

Identifying Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

In order to avoid comma splices and run-on sentences, your first step is to learn how to identify these errors. Notice how the following examples have two complete sentences without appropriate punctuation or separation.

- ***The board members voted to close the park, tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*** The part before the comma makes sense by itself, and the part after the comma makes sense by itself, but the punctuation is a mistake because there are two independent clauses joined by a comma, which just isn't strong enough to do this. Using a comma in this way can make readers misunderstand the relationship between the two ideas. This mistake is a *comma splice*.
- ***The board members voted to close the park tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*** Two independent clauses run together without an attempt to join them properly is a *run-on or fused sentence*.

Eliminating Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences

Once you have identified a comma splice or run-on, you have several revision options. The method you choose depends on the meaning you want to convey.

Creating a Complete Stop

The full stop and semicolon both indicate the end of an independent clause and both effectively correct a comma splice or a run-on, but they convey slightly different meanings to readers.

A semicolon tells readers that the two independent clauses are closely related without indicating the specific nature of that relationship (such as one of addition, contrast, choice, cause/effect). To convey a close relationship and demonstrate a visual connection between the ideas, place a semicolon between the two independent clauses:

- *The board members voted to close the park; tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*

A full stop creates a complete separation between the two independent clauses.

- *The board members voted to close the park. Tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*

The full stop separates the two thoughts. Both the full stop and the semicolon can be correctly used to separate sentences. However, the semicolon is not appropriate when the ideas are not closely related.

Joining the Two Thoughts

You can correct a comma splice or run-on by creating a compound sentence. One way to accomplish this task is to join two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (remember *FANBOYS*). The coordinating conjunction shows readers the relationship between the two independent clauses.

- *The board members voted to close the park, so tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*

Coordinating conjunctions can be used to demonstrate a number of relationships:

Conjunction	Relationship
for	cause/effect
and	addition
nor	negation
but	contrast
or	choice
yet	contrast
so	result

If both clauses are short or if the second clause's subject is a pronoun that represents the first clause's subject, it may be acceptable to omit the comma and to just use a coordinating conjunction. However, using a comma with the coordinating conjunction is still correct.

Another option you can try is joining two independent clauses with a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb and a comma. Using a semicolon along with a conjunctive adverb and a comma also indicates that a relationship exists between the two independent clauses:

- *The board members voted to close the park; consequently, tourists visited the park for the last time in October.*

The comma following the conjunctive adverb shows that the word *consequently* is introductory and serves to lead up to the main sentence. The second sentence itself supports and supplements the first. Use any of these possible common conjunctive adverbs to demonstrate their noted meanings:

To Show Addition	To Show Contrast	To Show Result	To Show Sequence
also	*anyway*	*accordingly*	*afterward*
again	*contrarily*	*consequently*	*meanwhile*
besides	*conversely*	*hence*	*next*
further	*however*	*subsequently*	*now*
furthermore	*instead*	*therefore*	*then*
moreover	*nevertheless*	*thus*	*thereafter*

To Show Comparison	To Show a Specific Case	To Return to a Point	To Recognize a Sub-point
likewise	*namely*	*nevertheless*	*certainly*
similarly	*specifically*	*still*	*undoubtedly*

To Show an Example	To Strengthen a Point	To Show Choice
for example	*indeed*	*otherwise*
for instance		

You can also join the two thoughts by adding a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of one of the independent clauses. This changes the nature of that independent clause, making it dependent. When a clause is dependent, it must be connected to an existing independent clause.

- *Tourists visited for the last time in October because the board members voted to close the park*

The independent clause is *tourists visited for the last time in October*. The subordinating conjunction is *because*, and the dependent clause comes **after** the independent clause, so no additional punctuation is needed.

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When the dependent clause is placed **before** the independent clause, separate it from the independent clause with a comma:

- *After the board members voted to close the park, tourists visited for the last time in October.*

The independent clause is *tourists visited for the last time in October*, the subordinate clause is *After the board members voted to close the park*, and a comma separates the two thoughts. Here's a list of common subordinating conjunctions you can use to create a similar relationship:

after	since
although	though
as	unless
as soon as	until
because	when
before	whenever
every time	whereas
if	while

Think About It

- Where do commas join two independent clauses in your writing, creating comma splices?
- Which sentences fuse or merge, creating run-on sentences?
- What relationship can you show by the way you choose to revise a comma splice or run-on sentence?

There are so many options to create clearer, seamless writing. Use one of the options detailed here to correct comma splices and run-on sentences in your writing, effectively connecting the ideas in your sentences.

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Parallel Structure
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 5

Winston Churchill inspired the British people with these lines during the darkest days of World War II: *We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.*

Not only did Churchill's lines stir the nation, but they also provide an excellent example of *parallel structure* (*parallelism*)—using the same patterns or grammatical forms to show that related ideas are equally important, as Churchill does by repeating *We shall fight.*

Parallel Structure With Lists of Words and Phrases

A list of words should use the same grammatical structure, like this:

- *The Yeti likes hiking, snowshoeing and cooking.*

This group of words (*hiking, snowshoeing and cooking*) has parallel structure because each word is an *–ing* verb acting like a noun (called a *gerund*). Notice also that the three words are separated by commas and joined by *and* before the last word. Here are more examples:

- *The Loch Ness Monster has been known to scare fishermen, to hide in the mist and to avoid cameras.*
- *The Loch Ness Monster has been known to scare fishermen, hide in the mist and avoid cameras.*

Again, these sentences have parallel structure because the lists use the same forms. The first uses *to + verb* (known as the *infinitive* form) while the second uses the base form of the verb. However, writers sometimes struggle with parallel structure when they mix forms like this:

- *Yowie have been photographed walking in the outback, hunting animals and to chase tourists.*

This sentence doesn't have parallel structure because the first two parts feature *–ing* verbs (*walking, hunting*) while the third part is a different structure (*to chase*). It doesn't matter whether the list is at the end or the beginning of the sentence either; parallel structure is still necessary. Sentences without it sound awkward and don't flow as well:

- *Quickly, quietly and in a sneaky manner, get away before the Yeti sees you.*

This sentence doesn't have parallel structure because two *–ly* adverbs are grouped with the phrase *in a sneaky manner*. Here's a better version with parallel structure:

- *Quickly, quietly and stealthily, get away before the Yeti sees you.*

Parallel structure isn't just for lists of words and short phrases; it's also required when longer phrases are grouped together:

- *The scientist said that the specimen was not a Yeti because it walked on four legs, ate plants and its hair wasn't long enough.*

Here, the first two phrases start with past tense verbs (*walked, ate*), but the third phrase takes a different form, so the structure isn't parallel. Here's the corrected form:

- *The scientist said that the specimen was not a Yeti because it walked on four legs, ate plants and had short hair.*

Parallel Structure With Clauses

The same ideas apply if you use a group of clauses (groups of words having both a subject and verb). Stay consistent with your grammatical form to maintain parallel structure. Here the structure doesn't remain consistent:

- *The explorer told her followers that they should get enough rest, that they should drink plenty of water and to watch out for monsters.*

Notice that the last part of the list (*to watch out for monsters*) is just a verb phrase instead of a clause like the first two. Check out these potential fixes to maintain parallel structure:

- *The explorer told her followers that they should get enough rest, that they should drink plenty of water and that they should watch out for monsters.*
- *The explorer told her followers to get enough rest, drink plenty of water and watch out for monsters.*

You always have options for fixing parallel structure. Choose whichever form of a word, phrase or clause works best so that your writing is consistent.

Parallel Structure With Correlative Conjunctions

Some pairs of words require special attention—the correlative conjunctions *not only/but also, either/or, neither/nor* and *both/and.* When using them in your writing, make sure the two parts have

the same grammatical form. This example uses a *complete sentence* with each part of a correlative conjunction:

- ***Not only** does Doctor Grant believe in jackalopes, **but** he **also** leads teams to search for the elusive creatures.*

In this example, just verb phrases are used:

- *Doctor Grant **not only** believes in jackalopes **but also** leads teams to search for the elusive creatures.*

Or you can use two nouns as this example does:

- *Doctor Grant believes in **not only** jackalopes **but also** unicorns.*

The same rules apply with the other three sets of correlative conjunctions:

- ***Either** Bigfoot **or** the Yeti left these huge footprints in the snow.*
- *Early in the morning, **neither** boating **nor** swimming should be attempted in Loch Ness.*
- ***Both** taking photographs **and** shooting videos would help prove that yowie exist.*

Using similar structure, such as clauses, phrases or words, after each of the conjunctions shows that the sentence parts are equally significant.

Parallel Structure With Coordinating Conjunctions

The seven coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) are used to link words, phrases and clauses. When using a coordinating conjunction (which you might remember from the acronym *FANBOYS*), make sure the ideas on both sides of the conjunction are parallel. Again, your goal is to use the same form of words or the same grammatical structure. Here, a coordinating conjunction (*and*) has verb phrases on each side:

- *She advised me to find some new friends and forget about what I saw.*

This use of parallelism shows that the phrases beginning with *find* and *forget* are equally important. Here's another example:

- *The joy of discovery is exciting, but the joy of exploration is exhilarating.*

Again, by using complete sentences on both sides of the coordinating conjunction (*but*), the ideas are shown to be equally important.

Think About It

- Where in your essay do you see lists of words or phrases that aren't yet parallel?
- What ideas within sentences would you like to show are equally important?
- Which correlative or coordinating conjunctions in your essay might need to be checked for parallel structure?

You don't need to be Winston Churchill to use parallel structure. You only need to review your ideas and ensure that closely related or equal thoughts are written in the same grammatical form.

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Using Modifiers Precisely
Chapter 5, Section 4: Lesson 6

A modifier is a word or phrase that describes, qualifies or limits another word or phrase. With modifiers, sentences are more interesting, vivid and engaging. However, carelessly used modifiers may make sentences more confusing, awkward or illogical.

Types of Modifiers

Modifiers can function as adjectives or adverbs. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. This type of modifier can be a single word or a phrase:

- *The **green** car stopped at the **red** light.* Here, *green* and *red* are adjectives that describe *car* and *light,* respectively.
- *The horse, **gleaming with sweat**, galloped to the barn.* The phrase *gleaming with sweat* describes *the horse.*

Adverbs and adverb clauses and phrases modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs:

- *He ran **quickly** to catch the bus.* Here, *quickly* describes the verb *ran*.
- ***After we walked home**, it started raining hard.* In this sentence, *after we walked home* describes the verb *started,* explaining when the rain began.
- *The song the orchestra performed was **very** long.* Here, *very* describes how long.
- *The snow piled **very quickly** on the sidewalk.* Here, *very* is an adverb describing *quickly,* another adverb that explains how the snow *piled*.

Misplaced Modifiers

Misplaced modifiers are improperly separated from the word(s) they modify; as a result, the sentences are confusing and may sound awkward or outlandish. Consider this example from Groucho Marx:

- *One morning I shot an elephant in my [pyjamas]. How he got into my [pyjamas] I'll never know.*

Here, *in my pyjamas* (the adjective phrase) is next to *elephant.* Marx doesn't mean that the elephant is inside the pyjamas, though. The subject (*I*) is. Thus, one revision option might read, *One morning while still in my pyjamas, I shot an elephant.*

Similarly, consider this sentence:

- *John walked home after Lois rejected him in silence.*

The words *in silence* (the adverbial phrase) are next to *after Lois rejected him*, implying that Lois rejected him without saying a word. That doesn't fit! Instead, the sentence should read: *After Lois rejected him, John walked home in silence.*

Adverbial modifiers are also misplaced sometimes. Check out the different meanings created when the adverb *only* is moved in these sentences:

- *The judge only hears complaints on Mondays.*
- *The judge hears complaints only on Mondays.*

In the first sentence, the judge hears nothing else on Mondays except the complaints. In the second, the judge hears many issues throughout the week, but if you want to share complaints, you would better come on a Monday since he won't listen any other day. As with adjective modifiers, placing the adverb close to the word it's meant to describe makes your meaning clearest.

Dangling Modifiers

These are modifiers that describe nothing in particular; they *seem* to describe, but the object or action

they actually describe is missing from the sentence:

- *To purchase a home, the salary needs to be higher.*

This sentence doesn't say who needs a better salary. Revised, the sentence could read

- *To purchase a home, Joaquim needs a higher salary.*

Other Modifiers

When used correctly, other modifiers can help clarify or emphasize material:

- ***Limiting modifiers***, such as *almost, even, just, merely* and *only,* should be placed right before or after the words they modify: *The court hears civic cases on Fridays **only**.*
- ***Summative modifiers*** emphasize a particular point as it summarises or renames a key word or phrase: *Economic changes have reduced African population growth to less than zero, **a demographic event that will have serious social implications.***
- ***Free modifiers*** describe a phrase that refers back to something earlier in the sentence and can be moved somewhere else in the sentence without changing the meaning. A comma comes before the phrase when it ends a sentence: *Achilles killed the minotaur, **chopping off its head**.* A comma comes after the phrase when it begins a sentence: **C*hopping off its head***, *Achilles killed the minotaur.*

On the other hand, some modifiers must be carefully placed to avoid misunderstanding or confusion:

- ***Squinting modifiers*** accidentally refer to two words. If a modifier squints, readers won't know whether it modifies the word before or after it. To revise, place the modifier where it clearly relates to a single word: *Musicians who practice consistently will improve.* The meaning here could be that the practicing is consistent, or it could be that the improvement is consistent. Readers won't know unless the modifier stops squinting: *Musicians who practice will **consistently** improve.*
- ***Disrupting modifiers*** interrupt connections between parts of a sentence, making it difficult for readers to follow the train of thought: *Vegetables will, if cooked too long, lose most of their nutritional value.* A possible revision is *If cooked too long, vegetables will lose most of their nutritional value.*

Using *Good*, *Well, Bad* and *Badly*

Spoken language is often different from written language. Some modifiers used in daily conversation won't work in formal writing, but others will. When you speak, you can use *good* and *well* or *bad* and *badly* almost interchangeably. Either of these pairs of examples would be acceptable in casual conversation:

- *I feel **good**.*
- *I am **well**, thank you.*
- *I feel **badly** for your loss.*
- *I feel **bad** for your loss.*

In academic writing, though, one should be more careful. To understand how to use these modifiers correctly, take a close look at your verbs. *Good* and *bad* are adjectives, and that means you will use them after linking verbs like *is, smell, feel, taste* and so on:

- *The patient complained that food **tasted bad**.*
- *The news about the fire **was bad**.*

Well and *badly,* however, are considered adverbs. Use them after action verbs like *bowl* or *skip* or *sleep*:

- *The retired CEO **surfs badly**.*
- *The new patient slept **well**.*

Because many people use the adjective and adverb forms interchangeably in casual conversation, it can be difficult to relearn the rules for formal writing, especially with the use of the word *well.* In specific circumstances, *well* can be used as an adjective referring to health. That is, if you've been feeling ill and someone asks if you're finally feeling better, you could certainly say, *I'm well now. Thanks for asking!*

Remember that the key to correctly using *good*, *well*, *bad* and *badly* lies with your verbs. If your verb is an action verb, like *surfs* or *skips*, then an adverb is needed. If, on the other hand, you use a linking verb—such as *am* or *was*, you need an adjective.

Think About It

- Where could modifiers help make your sentences more interesting?
- When should you revise the use of modifiers to emphasize or clarify a point?
- When should you use *good* instead of *well* or *well* instead of *good?*

Using well-placed adjectives and adverbs will create interesting sentences, engage your readers and emphasize or explain a point. Know the rules of modifier placement to avoid confusing or misleading sentences.

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Chapter 6: Writing Style

Building Your Writing Style
Chapter 6: Lesson 1

If you compare samples of your writing from your younger days to more recent samples, you may find that your writing reflects more wisdom or maturity. In addition, you may find shifts in your vocabulary or how you express the same emotion or idea. These are all reflective of your writing style: the specific way you articulate your ideas. *Style* generally refers to how you present yourself in your written work. It takes time to develop your style as a writer, but it will be immensely rewarding.

Defining Style

Some writers define style as how you arrange your words while other writers believe that style is simply being clear. Still others say that you can develop your own style by learning and imitating the work of great writers.

For most academic purposes, you will focus on developing an academic writing style or tone. This will typically mean using clear, concise language and specific, field-related jargon as appropriate. In creative writing, on the other hand, styles are often completely different from those adopted by academic writers, and you may find yourself using different styles for different creative writing tasks. Likewise, audience impacts style. You likely would not write in the same style for your best friend as you would for your lecturer.

Each writer has a personal style, one consciously developed for different writing situations, as well. In other words, you can write with a stronger style by paying attention to the words you choose and the way you arrange them. Your writing style will often demonstrate different levels as well as varied quality, or clarity.

Levels

You're probably already used to switching between different levels of style. For example, you might greet a friend on a street with *Hey, how's it going?* You wouldn't use the same words for your boss,

though. Instead, you would probably say something like: *Hello, how are you?* One greeting is informal while the other is formal. The first reveals a friendly connection with a friend who is an equal while the second reveals a polite connection with an employer who is a superior in a working relationship. You may not realise it, but you make judgement calls about levels of style all the time. For example, you write informally in

- personal letters
- emails to friends or family
- personal journals or diaries
- narrative stories

You write formally in

- official reports
- emails to supervisors or lecturers
- letters to a newspaper or media editor
- most university writing assignments

Taking the time to consider how formal your writing style should be will help you address your audience in an appropriate manner. It will also help you put your best foot forward in certain circumstances. In other situations, you can communicate your ideas more clearly by considering how you already relate to your audience.

Quality

Quality of style most often means clarity, which occurs when sentences are correct and concise. Quality also means choosing the most precise words for the meaning that you want to convey and editing your work to revise inappropriate words or phrases. Knowing your own style is important for your growth as a writer. If you believe you can control your writing style by making conscious choices, you will be a more powerful writer.

For example, consider the following two samples from a business email. Which one demonstrates a higher level of quality?

- *Hey there: How's it going? I need you to call me ASAP about your account. Please call me, okay?*
- *I hope you are doing well. I'd like to talk to you about your account at your earliest convenience. Please call me at (555) 555-5555. Thank you!*

Most people would agree that the second example reflects a higher quality of writing: it's more suited to the nature of the communication, and it uses standard writing conventions rather than slang or casual writing found in peer-to-peer communication. Any reader can instantly understand the communication without having to translate the slang.

One reason to be concerned about the quality of your writing style is that employers need (and more often promote) employees with a clear writing style. A variety of professions (architecture, engineering, medicine, law, teaching and support services) require employees to write regularly, and employees' poor or unclear writing reflects negatively on their employers.

Your Writing Style

How do you know that you have a personal writing style? Interestingly, you've been developing your writing style since you first learned to write. You may have had lecturers who recognized your writing even when you forgot to put your name on your paper or bosses who recognized your work even when your name wasn't on the finished product. That's because your writing style, or the choices you make about arranging your words, is particular to you, just like your handwriting, your sense of fashion or your hairstyle.

In the past, you may have paid more attention to your clothing or hairstyles than to your writing style. In fact, you may have believed that your writing style wasn't under your control. Fortunately, you can

control your style through word-, sentence- and paragraph-level choices that will make your writing more concise, powerful and interesting.

Your writing can speak volumes about you. If your boss is reading a piece you wrote, for instance, could he or she make an accurate judgement of who you are and what you are capable of? Making more conscious decisions about your style will ensure that your writing is not only recognisable but also a point of pride for you.

Think About It

- How would you describe your personal writing style?
- If someone had never met you, what would he or she say about you based on your writing style?
- What are some things you can do to develop your own style in your writing assignments?

Writing style includes both levels and quality of writing. A strong style that you develop and practise consciously will shape your writing for different audiences and purposes, making you a stronger and more engaging writer.

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Point of View
Chapter 6: Lesson 2

Suppose you have been asked to write an essay about which 'fad' diet is the most effective. How should your thesis statement look?

- *I think the ketogenic diet is the best diet that is out there today.*
- *You could say that the ketogenic diet is an effective diet.*
- *The ketogenic diet is the most effective diet among 'fad' diets today because it encourages the use of ketones, rather than sugar, and results in weight loss and reduced intake of carbohydrates.*

Which sounds more polished and authoritative? Most people would say the third one. This is because it takes on a more detached and academic point of view by using the third person rather than the more casual first person (*I*) or second person (*you*) points of view. Whether or not you realise it, you choose a point of view every time you write an assignment. Picking the most effective point of view (first, second or third) helps you set the tone for your paper. As indicated above, though, the third person point of view is considered the most effective for developing an academic tone. Check with your assignment description and/or lecturer to determine if you are permitted to use other points of view in your work.

Point of View

You may have already been asked to accomplish a wide variety of tasks in your writing. For instance, perhaps you have compared and contrasted two unique topics, or you have presented your findings regarding a certain business practice or ethical dilemma. You may have analysed a piece of writing, an idea or a theory. Perhaps you have even written reflectively about a course or experience. These writing tasks have different purposes, and while each of them requires an academic tone for your academic audience, you may have found yourself using a different point of view. Reflective writing tasks, for example, use first person point of view to describe events the writer has experienced first-hand. A person's point of view is that person's opinion. A writer's point of view, however, is a bit different.

The three major points of view are first, second and third. The personal pronouns a writer uses determines his or her point of view. Each set of pronouns places a focus either on the speaker *(I)*, the reader *(you)* or the topic.

First-Person Point of View

The first-person point of view (*I, we*) always puts the most focus on the speaker, or writer. It's effective for essays about personal experiences, such as reflections. Although you can write reflectively about yourself in the third person, the result is generally awkward and less natural than when you use the first person for such projects. When you write about yourself, you become a character in your story. For instance, consider the following paragraph from a personal essay written entirely in the first person:

- *When I graduated from senior secondary school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life. It wasn't until I worked for a few years that I realised I wanted to become a nurse. To do that, I needed a university degree.*

Because this essay talks about a personal experience, the first-person point of view is appropriate. Likewise, first-person point of view can be effective when a writer is discussing the role they play in a research experiment. Phrasing such as 'this learner' or 'this researcher' can be awkward and confusing, but 'I' is straightforward. Therefore, APA 6 and APA 7, advocate the use of first-person point of view when discussing the writer's role in the research experiment. However, check with your assignment description/lecturer for the final word on using the first-person point of view in your writing.

Second-Person Point of View

The second-person point of view (*you, your*) puts the reader in the foreground of the writer-reader exchange. It should be avoided in first-person essays because it can so easily cause a shift in point of view. A shift happens when writers unintentionally use more than one point of view. It also should be avoided in most academic writing because it leads to informality and it may make assumptions about your reader that could be alienating. If, however, you are writing to advise your readers, as you would if you were developing a set of directions, the second person may be appropriate. Likewise, if you are writing informally, such as developing a letter to a friend, second person can also be appropriate. Check out this example of a passage from an essay offering instructions on how to train for a 5K race:

> *When you decide to train for a 5K race, it's important to pick out a training plan that fits your current level of fitness. By looking at how much you currently exercise, you can decide what training plan is the best place to start.*

In this case, the pronoun *you* engages the reader to think about where he or she should start training for this race. Using the second person here engages the person reading the essay. It is important to check with your lecturer or assignment description regarding the appropriateness of using the second person point of view. Most academic writing tasks do not allow for it; however, it may be permitted in creative writing tasks.

Third-Person Point of View

The third-person point of view (*he, she, it*) is most commonly used for academic, technical and business writing, as well as any other sort of writing that has an academic, business-minded or persuasive intention or purpose. In the third person, the focus shifts away from the writer to the subject. Has a lecturer ever asked you to omit a phrase like *I think* or *I believe* from a sentence? If so, that's because, when you're writing in the third person, the speaker (writer) is secondary to the idea being expressed. You need to keep the focus on your ideas, so take yourself out of the sentence.
If you think about it, the only real difference between *I think it is going to snow* and *It is going to snow* is that the *I* in the first example shifts the focus of the sentence to the speaker rather than the fact that it's going to snow. This difference makes the second sentence seem far more authoritative than the first.

Here's an example written only in the third person:

- *While Europe has influenced much of Australian culture today, the Aboriginal Australian peoples' art, music and spiritual traditions have withstood the test of time. Because of this, Australia maintains a unique cultural tradition, some of which is relatively untouched by European influences.*

This passage describes a scene in which neither the writer nor the reader participate. The focus is on the Aboriginal Australian peoples and their influence on Australian culture. Using the third-person point of view highlights the details in this passage and emphasizes the facts, making the passage more convincing.

Think About It

- When should you use first-person point of view to avoid awkward phrasing?
- When is third-person point of view most appropriate?
- Where do you need make changes so point of view is consistent?

With the appropriate point of view, you can set the tone for your work by focusing on your experiences, engaging directly with your reader, or disengaging to focus on your information. Selecting the correct point of view, which, for academic writing, is usually third person, will allow you to create objective, credible writing. The appropriate point of view helps your writing address your audience and assignment more effectively!

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Consistent Tone and Voice
Chapter 6: Lesson 3

When you read a well-written piece, it’s as if you can almost *hear* what the writer has to say. This is often the result of the writer’s tone and voice. Being consistent in tone and developing your voice strengthens your writing and helps you appropriately address different audiences.

Voice

Your *voice* includes qualities of your writing that distinguish it from any other writer’s style. This voice comes from the decisions you make about the subject matter and the way you approach your topic. Voice is most commonly associated with creative writing. For example, think of books in a series, whether they are in a trilogy or a longer collection. You may notice writing habits that give the writing a certain *feel*. Perhaps the author uses long sentences or quaint language. Combined, these habits produce a *voice:* an individual writing style that is like no other. While voice is associated with creative writing, it is also a part of any writing. For example, an academic writer may choose to write in lengthy sentences or short sentences; they may make decisions about what words to use and how to integrate source material. Finding your own voice means playing with your own method of expressing yourself on paper. Studying style—both your own and other people's—will help you find your voice. One very important element of developing your voice is *tone.*

Tone

Imagine this scenario: You have just cleaned the entire house for your parents. You have picked up old magazines and dirty dishes, dusted, vacuumed and even cracked open new air fresheners. Your mother walks in after a long day at work and, looking around, says, *I just can’t believe this!* Your mother's tone will convey pleasure.

But what if your mother came home earlier than you expected, before you had time to clean up a big mess you had made? She could use the same words—*I just can’t believe this!*—but she would communicate something very different in tone. Her facial expressions, body language and the pitch and volume of her voice would convey this difference.

In written English, tone means much the same thing as it does in spoken English. It refers to *how* something is said as opposed to *what* is said. The term *tone* describes the writer's attitude about himself or herself, the audience or the subject. Because writers can't rely on body language, their written tonal cues must be very clear. Word choice is one important way to indicate your tone. Consider the following examples:

- *The President died*. (This states a simple fact.)
- *The President was killed*. (His death was not from natural causes.)
- *The President was murdered*. (Someone intentionally caused it.)
- *The President was assassinated*. (He was still acting as the leader of the country at the time and was likely killed for political reasons.)

One small change in word choice can make a world of difference in your tone and in the meaning of your sentence. As a writer, you will determine your word choice and tone based on your purpose and your intended audience. Academic essays generally require a more formal tone unless otherwise indicated by your assignment description and/or lecturer.

Staying Consistent
Your tone will be influenced by decisions you make before you even begin to write an essay. Your essay's purpose and audience will determine your tone, so you should have some sense of what your purpose and audience are. For example, reflective writing may allow for a more informal tone that uses the first-person point of view and contractions. A business report for employer may require a more formal, authoritative and objective tone.

No matter what you are writing, communicate a sense of authority over your subject matter; an inconsistent tone will undermine your authority. When analysing a work of literature, for example, refer to the work you are analysing and to academic criticism of that work. Unless your assignment requires you to write about yourself or unless you are describing the steps you took during a research experiment, using third person sets the appropriate formal tone for academic writing. For example, if writing about Ambrose Bierce's 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge', you would avoid informal conventions, such as contractions, as well as unnecessary use of first-person pronouns, as seen here:

- *I was just blown away at the ending to 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge'. You totally won't believe how Bierce ends this story. It's a complete surprise!*

This example focuses too much on the writer's response to the text and too little on the text itself. It undermines the writer's credibility by straying too far from the essay's intention, which is to analyse the short story by talking about the devices the author uses in it. The first- and second-person point of view are far less formal than the assignment requires, so the writer's tone seems too casual and juvenile to present an informed position. Here's a revised example:

- *Ambrose Bierce uses a non-linear plot and stream of consciousness to create an effective plot twist in this short story.*

This revision is an improvement because it maintains the third-person point of view, which authoritatively discusses the use of literary devices in this short story.

On the other hand, if you are writing a personal essay about an experience that changed your life in some way, first-person pronouns are usually appropriate (check with your assignment description and/or lecturer to be sure). This is because personal essays have a different purpose than academic essays: They require you to communicate your own personal experience.

- *When I was little, I begged for a dog. My parents resisted, knowing that I was not fully prepared to take on the responsibility of caring for another living thing. On my twelfth birthday, however, they relented. While I was more mature by then, nothing could have prepared me for the journey my labradoodle Wilbur and I were about to take.*

Because the writer is talking about a first experience with dog ownership in a personal essay, using the first-person point of view makes sense because it creates a more personal and intimate tone where the reader is privy to the writer's thoughts.

Think About It

- What can you do to ensure that your tone is consistent throughout a piece of writing?
- Which words, carefully chosen, will convey the tone you want to express?
- How can you continue to develop your own voice as a writer?

Voice is the unique style a writer uses to communicate his or her ideas. *Tone* is the attitude a writer communicates toward his or her subject and audience. Continue to work on experimenting with tone and finding your voice as a writer!

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Word Choice
Chapter 6: Lesson 4

In *The Triggering Town*, the American poet Richard Hugo says, 'I caution against communication because once language exists only to convey information, it is dying'. Hugo, of course, isn't telling his readers *not* to communicate when they speak and write; instead, he's urging them to do *more* than communicate. Beyond just delineating facts, words should emphasize the power a writer has to create emotional associations, concreteness, precision, accuracy, intimacy and accessibility.

Denotation and Connotation

Every word has two levels of meaning—a *denotation* and a *connotation*. The *denotation* of a word is its literal meaning, or dictionary definition. For instance, the noun *mother* simply means 'a female parent'. Deepening this word's literal definition, however, is its *connotation*—its implied meaning, or the emotions most readers associate with it. Layering in the connotation of *mother* generates a rich mental picture of all-embracing love, comfort, warmth and home—a distinctly positive image. A word's connotation may be *positive*, *neutral* or *negative*, which means that words with equivalent denotations can deliver entirely different messages. Look at these illustrations:

- *Albert's mother is a **thrifty** shopper.*
- *Albert's mother is an **economical** shopper.*
- *Albert's mother is a **penny-pinching** shopper.*

Although the sentences in this list share the same literal meaning—Albert's mother is *careful not to waste money* when she shops—the connotation of the adjective in each statement differently impacts reader response and interpretation. While the first sentence suggests admiration for the way Albert's mother spends her money, the second offers a more objective observation and the third labels her as unnecessarily reluctant to part with money. As you can see, a word's connotation is a tool that the powerful author can manipulate to control audience emotion and impact overall tone.

Concrete/Precise and Abstract/Vague Words

When you notice the meanings and associations of words, you can't help but see that words are *symbols*, or abstractions, representing real things and actions. Because words are necessarily removed from the concepts that they represent and from the audience reading them, using *concrete words* can help you bring your readers into more direct and immediate involvement with your ideas. *Concrete words* are words that you can almost see, touch, smell, taste or hear: *smoke, velvet, garlic, salt, wind chime.* Because such words convey the same rich and precise ideas to individuals across settings and experiences, they are easy to understand. Verbs describing actions are concrete because they're easy to 'see' or otherwise experience: *sway*, *dance*, *grimace*, *burn*, *murmur*. Though less

concrete than nouns and action verbs, adverbs and adjectives can be concrete if they describe other words in a perceptible manner: *sneeringly, bumpily, fishy, spicy, blaring.*

Unlike concrete words, *abstract words* refer to concepts that can't be experienced with the physical senses: *acceptance*, *liberation*, *love*, *prejudice*, *responsibility*. Because these words have different meanings across time, cultures and individuals, readers must work harder to relate to these ideas. Using concrete words transforms your sentences by making your ideas more vibrant and easier to understand, as demonstrated here:

- Abstract: *After his dream, the scared boy decided to seek comfort from his mother.*
- Concrete: *After waking from his nightmare, the trembling pre-schooler crept into his parents' bed and snuggled himself up to his mother's warm body.*

Note that the more concrete a word choice, the more precise it becomes: *After waking from* is more precise than *after* alone, and *trembling* is more precise than *scared*. Because the language is more concrete, readers can better imagine the child, the dream and the means of comfort:

- The child is not just a *boy*; he is a *pre-schooler.*
- He didn't have a mere *dream*; he had a *nightmare.*
- He didn't seek just any form of *comfort*; he crept *into his parents' bed and snuggled himself up to his mother's warm body*.

Concrete and precise wording makes the audience do less work by giving them a vivid scenario. Similar strategies can be helpful in academic writing as well. For instance, one might describe a scenario as *very likely* or *imminent*. Each conveys a different level of clarity.

Other Word Choice Considerations

In addition to fitting your purpose and audience, your word choice must also be accurate.

Homonyms and Homophones

Homonyms are words that share the same pronunciation and spelling but have different meanings. For instance, *ground* ('the surface of the earth') is pronounced and spelled the same as *ground* ('to prohibit an aircraft or person from flying') and *ground* ('reduced to fine particles through crushing'). Because homonyms share the same spelling, they aren't as great a concern as *homophones. Homophones* are words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings. Just a few of these confusable words include

- *bare/bear*
- *hear/here*
- *it's/its*
- *principal/principle*
- *their/there/they're*
- *To/too/two*

Using the wrong one of these same-sounding words will change a sentence's meaning. Consider these sentences, which express vastly different ideas:

- *The rug was bare skin.*
- *The rug was bear skin.*

While the second rug might lie in a log cabin, the first exists more appropriately in a horror story. To ensure accurate expression, take care to select the correct option when choosing among homonyms.

Long Words

Some people erroneously believe that the 'best' word to use in a sentence is always the longest or most complex because it makes the writer appear more intelligent. In reality, short, everyday words make text accessible, direct and clear. Look at the following pair of sentences:

Pearson

- *The precipitous prominence ascended beneath the illumination of the natural satellite.*
- *The steep mountain rose in the light of the moon.*

Both these sentences describe the same image of a mountain, but the second is more effective in its description. Not only does the first sentence sound pretentious, but it's also so complex that the audience's interest and understanding fade as they try to interpret it. Limiting the use of long words, as in the second sentence, can keep readers interested and your meaning clear.

Euphemisms
Euphemisms are expressions commonly used to make statements less offensive or harsh. For example, a person fired from his job may claim to be the victim of a *workforce imbalance correction*. The military describes a civilian death as *collateral damage*, and hospitals report patient death as a *negative patient-care outcome*. These expressions deceitfully mask reality and create distance between your audience and your ideas. Avoid them in academic writing.

Jargon
Jargon is specialised language used by members of particular groups or professions. Only individuals who are highly familiar with computer technology, for instance, are easily able to comprehend terms like *Secure Sockets Layer (SSL)* or *Virtual Private Network (VPN).* Your use of jargon will depend on your audience and purpose. If you write about computers to a group of computer experts, you probably won't need to define any of the technical language unless there's a chance the expert may not be familiar with it. On the other hand, if you write about computer technology to an audience unfamiliar with it, you will need to define the jargon or avoid it completely.

Slang and Slang Syntax
Slang is very informal language. Like jargon, it's meant to communicate ideas in a specific context or group. Slang often consists of figurative language, like the adjectives *cool* or *wicked*, which both refer to something unusually popular or good. Slang expressions help define their speakers and are fine in informal speech, but they're too informal and too audience-specific for use in an academic essay.

Archaic Words
Archaic words—such as *albeit*, *perchance*, *therewith* and *withal*—are no longer used in everyday language. Unless they're used ironically or in an appropriate context (like in a legal document), archaic words produce an artificial and pretentious tone that most readers won't appreciate. It's best to avoid them unless your purpose requires such language.

Think About It

- Which words carry connotations that reinforce your intended meaning?
- What concrete and precise words vibrantly and directly express your ideas?
- What words should you use—or avoid—to increase the accuracy and accessibility of your writing?

Considering these questions as you choose your words will enable you to assert your power as a writer, impact your reader and do more than simply communicate information through your composition. As Richard Hugo also states, 'If you want to communicate, use the telephone'.

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Formal and Informal Language
Chapter 6: Lesson 5

What's the best movie you've ever seen? How you answer the question depends on who's asking, right? Let's say your English lecturer asks. The answer might look like this:

- The Shawshank Redemption*, which was directed by Frank Darabont, mixes award-winning acting with powerful themes, creating a gripping experience for the viewer.*

But if your best friend asks, you might answer like this:

- The Shawshank Redemption *is the best! Morgan Freeman nailed it. I'd watch it again any time.*

In the first answer, the word choices are more formal while the second answer uses informal language. Several choices separate formal and informal language.

Formal Language Usually Uses Third-Person Point of View

You probably noticed in the examples above that the informal one uses *I* (first-person point of view)*,* while the formal uses third-person point of view, referring to *viewers* instead of *I.* Formal language also avoids second-person point of view (*you*). Rather than referring directly to readers, formal writing uses third person:

- Less formal: *You can discover the truth through experiments.*
- More formal: *Researchers can discover the truth through experiments.*

Referring directly to readers (*you*) seems overly conversational and can be confusing as not all readers may relate to the situation being described: *When giving birth, you must consider the cleanliness of the environment.*

Switching to a more formal third-person statement looks like this: *When giving birth, women must consider the cleanliness of the environment.*

As with most rules and guidelines, there are exceptions to this rule as well. If it is awkward to use third-person point of view, such as when a writer discusses the steps they have taken in a research experiment, first-person point of view is generally considered more appropriate than phrasing like 'this learner' or unclear phrasing like 'the researcher'. You should check with your lecturer, though to ensure you know their preferences on your use of first-person point of view.

Formal Language Avoids Conversational Word Choices

While the formal example above says the movie was 'a gripping experience for the viewer', the informal example says it 'is the best!' These choices illustrate one of the differences between formal and informal words. Similarly, writing that 'Morgan Freeman nailed it' is far more informal than writing about the 'award-winning acting'. Formal writing won't sound like speaking.

Formal Language Avoids Contractions

In formal essays, you should probably avoid contractions and write out the words instead. While this guideline is becoming more relaxed, it is still best to err on the side of caution and avoid contractions altogether unless you are certain your audience does not mind contractions. In the examples above, the informal writing includes the contraction *I'd*. Watch for contractions in formalwriting and replace them by spelling out the complete words. As a bonus, avoiding contractions makes it easier to identify apostrophe errors because you won't need to search through the apostrophes in contractions. For instance, consider this very common error: *The soundtrack was at it's best near the end of the movie.* Taking a closer look at this sentence, you probably see that *it's* means *it is*. You would never write *The soundtrack was at **it is** best near the end of the movie*, so that tells you the apostrophe is unnecessary for the possessive (something belonging to *it* is written *its*)*.* Avoiding contractions might help you catch this common mistake.

Formal Language is Easily Understood

Writing in a formal, academic style doesn't mean using the biggest, fanciest words you can find. Exactly the opposite is true. In *On Writing Well,* William Zinnser says, 'Clutter is the disease of American writing'. And William Strunk writes in *The Elements of Style,* 'Omit Needless Words'. Consider the formal example above again:

- The Shawshank Redemption*, which was directed by Frank Darabont, mixes award-winning acting with powerful themes, creating a gripping experience for the viewer.*

And now consider a wordier alternative:

- The Shawshank Redemption*, which was directed by Frank Darabont, merges award-winning dramatic performances with potent thematic choices, generating a transfixing experience for the observer.*

The second example reads like a thesaurus exploded. Choosing rarely used words doesn't make writing more formal—it makes writing more difficult to understand. Formal writing doesn't use slang, but it doesn't require multi-syllabic words at every opportunity either.

Formal Writing Avoids Slang and Shorthand

If Hamlet had a smartphone, he might have texted, *2 b or not 2 b.* Formal writing, however, completely avoids shorthand. Even words like *thru* (instead of *through*) are considered misspellings. Writing essays is different than texting, much like answering a question in class is different than chatting with your friends. Slang terms, such as writing that a car is *sweet* or that a new band is *cool,* should also be avoided in formal writing.

Some Academic Writing is Not Formal

If you are writing a personal essay, such as a reflection, informal language is, at times, permissible (check with your assignment description and/or lecturer). Personal essays have different purposes than most academic writing tasks. Instead of convincing readers to think differently or exploring a concept in depth, you are sharing about yourself. In personal essays, using first person and conversational word choices is often useful. Using too formal a style in personal essays can cause you to seem aloof or standoffish, which might make your readers doubt your sincerity. Consider this introduction to a personal reflection paper: *As one traverses through existence on this planet, one finds that errors are a common occurrence.*

The formal language doesn't make you want to jump in and read more, does it? Now how about this less formal introduction to a personal reflection: *I have done some foolish things in life, but I have realised that I'm not alone.*

See the differences? The less formal example uses first-person point of view and contractions, and it sounds more natural and conversational, making it more engaging as part of an informal essay.

Think About It

- What type of essay has been assigned—does it seem more formal or more informal?
- What specific instructions has your lecturer given about contractions and point of view?
- When tempted to use conversational words, what replacements can you try instead?

Writing in an informal style isn't a death knell for your formal essay. Writers often create early drafts in more natural, informal language, shifting to more formal wording in later drafts. As you near the end of the drafting process, look to make your language match the assignment goals and intended audience.

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Wordiness
Chapter 6: Lesson 6

Because writing assignments often include a minimum word count, writers may find themselves adding words just for the sake of the count or to sound more 'academic'. In truth, nothing makes

sentences duller than wordiness—the use of many words when few would convey exactly the same meaning. Take care to avoid wordiness, which can creep into sentences in many ways.

Empty Additions

Sometimes writers add a word (or a syllable to a word) hoping to make that word stronger. This does not always work:

- For instance, *stalling for time* means exactly the same thing as *stalling*. 'To stall' actually means 'to delay action in order to gain time', so *stalling for time* means *delaying action in order to gain time for time!*
- *Overexaggerate* means *exaggerate*. If *Henry exaggerates his symptoms to get the day off,* he claims they're more serious than they actually are. Since to exaggerate is to overstate, to 'overexaggerate' is to 'overoverstate', which makes no sense.
- *The honest truth* vs. *the truth.* Everyone knows what the truth is. Can there be a dishonest truth? No, so *honest* adds nothing.
- *Past experience* vs. *experience.* Who would cite experience not yet experienced?

In each case, looking at the definition of the word will tell you if it needs the 'extra' word you considered. Here are some additional examples:

- *fewer in number* vs. *fewer*
- *until such time as* vs. *until*
- *false pretence* vs. *pretence*
- *irregardless* vs. *regardless*
- *free gift* vs. *gift*
- *added bonus* vs. *bonus*
- *advance warning* vs. *warning*
- *actual facts* vs. *facts*
- *bald-headed* vs. *bald*
- *blend together* vs. *blend*
- *bouquet of flowers* vs. *bouquet*
- *basic fundamentals* vs. *fundamentals*
- *eradicate completely* vs. *eradicate*

And this is only a partial list! However, sometimes words may be used metaphorically, in which case the rules change. *Bouquet of flowers* is wordy, but *bouquet of bananas* isn't because *bouquet* isn't being used literally. Eliminate similar empty additions from your writing.

Helicoptering With Adverbs

Intensifying adverbs and adverbial constructions will clutter your sentences if used unwisely. For example, you might quote someone, saying, *'You're doing excellent work,' she said encouragingly.* Since her words are literally encouraging, the adverb adds nothing.

Expletive Constructions

Beginning sentences with *It is* (where *it* does not have an antecedent) and *There is* or *There are* will always create wordiness. Consider the first draft of the following sentence:

- *There is a pack of dingoes roaming the countryside in the evenings. It is dangerous situations like this that have caused us to increase security on the livestock.*

Now, take a look at the revision:

- *A pack of dingoes roam the countryside in the evenings. Dangerous situations like this have caused us to increase security on the livestock.*

Ridding sentences of these expletive constructions will tighten them up.

Taking the Long Way Around

Sometimes writers are tempted to use two words when one would do, thinking that the longer phrase sounds more learned. The truth is, if the extra words don't improve on the few, then the sentence will sound—and be—cluttered. Here are just a few examples:

because	*due to the fact that, for the reason that, owing to the fact that, because of the fact that*
now	*at this point in time, at present*
over	*over and above*
although, though	*despite the fact that, regardless of the fact that, notwithstanding the fact that*
if	*in the event that, if it should happen that*
about	*in reference to, in regard to, as regards*
can	*is able to, has the capacity to, has the capability of*

The list is endless. There is no difference in meaning between the following examples:

- *My dog* ***has the capability of*** *playing frisbee with herself* ***due to the fact that*** *she can run faster than the thrown frisbee.*
- *My dog* ***can*** *play frisbee with herself* ***because*** *she can run faster than the thrown frisbee.*

But there's a big difference in readability. When you are tempted to substitute a long, high-sounding phrase for a humble word like *if*, trust that humble word.

Think About It

- What is the exact word needed for your meaning?
- Which adverbs are necessary? What do they add besides word count?
- Which phrases in your sentences could be expressed as a single word?
- Which words will be most effective when choosing quality over quantity?

As George Orwell said, 'If it is possible to cut a word out, cut it out'. Your readers will thank you!

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Active and Passive Voice
Chapter 6: Lesson 7

In English, verbs do not only have tenses—they also have voices. While tense has to do with time, voice is all about the relationship between the subject of the sentence and the action of the verb. No matter what, the subject of a sentence is in the spotlight: The grammatical subject is the person or thing that the sentence focuses on. Choosing to use active or passive voice is a matter of style, depending on whether you need to emphasize the subject or action in your sentence. Typically, academic writing is stronger with active voice, but at times, passive voice is more effective.

The Difference Between Active Voice and Passive Voice

If the sentence is in the active voice, then the subject *is doing the acting*. If the sentence is in the passive voice, then something or someone else *is acting upon* the subject. When deciding whether to use active or passive voice, you can look at any action in two different ways. For example, if you want to tell someone about the financial well-being of a company, you have two choices. First, you could start by focusing on the company, making the word *company* the grammatical subject of the sentence:

- *The company has lost money this quarter.*

The other choice is to start by talking about the money, making the word *money* the grammatical subject of the sentence:

- *Money has been lost by the company this quarter.*

In *The company **has lost** money this quarter,* the active form of the verb *lost* shows that the grammatical subject did the action. In *Money **has been lost** by the company this quarter*, the passive form of *lost* shows an action done **to** the grammatical subject.

The verb ***has lost*** is in the *active voice;* the verb ***has been lost*** is in the *passive voice*.

Some other active/passive sentences might read as follows:

- *The company encourages growth. / Growth is encouraged by the company.*
- *The company will never recover the money. / The money will never be recovered by the company.*
- *The company may have angered its stakeholders. / Its stakeholders may have been angered by the company.*
- *My company was earning profits last quarter. / Profits were being earned by my the company last quarter.*

The active and passive verbs are in the same tense, but the active sentences are shorter and simpler than the passive sentences. This makes the active sentences more direct.

Forming the Passive

You can see from the examples above that a verb in the passive voice always has two elements:

- A form of the verb *to be*
- The past participle (sometimes called *passive participle*) of the main verb.

Intransitive Verbs

Some verbs can't be made passive because they're intransitive, which means that they cannot take a direct object. Remember that the direct object receives the action of the verb in the active voice (In *I gave my love a rose, I* does the action, while *rose* is the thing given.) The direct object works as the subject of a passive sentence (*A **rose** was given to my love*). Intransitive verbs can't take a direct object, so they can't become passive. Take a look:

- *To die*: You cannot die something, but you can kill it. *To kill* is a transitive verb.
- *To sleep*: You cannot sleep somebody, but you can stupefy him. *To stupefy* is a transitive verb.
- *To sit*: You cannot sit anyone, but you can seat her. *To seat* is a transitive verb.

Choosing Between Active and Passive

Sentences written in the active voice tend to be more engaging and often less wordy. *Max is writing his sweetheart a letter right now* is direct; *A letter is being written right now by Max to his sweetheart* is cluttered with extra words and forces readers to think primarily about the letter instead of sweet, lovesick Max.

Also, the active voice is often clearer and more honest than the passive. The passive voice is sometimes used, whether deliberately or subconsciously, to avoid assigning responsibility for an action.

The sentence *Electronic cigarettes are marketed as perfectly safe* avoids naming the entity doing the marketing; *The manufacturers of electronic cigarettes market their product as perfectly safe* puts the group responsible for this decision front and centre by making it the subject of the sentence. While the active voice is usually preferable to the passive, the passive voice does have some legitimate uses,

regardless of what grammar-checking software suggests. The rule is not *Always use the active voice.* The rule is *Use the active voice* ***if there is no good reason to use the passive voice.***

When to Use the Passive Voice

- **The actor is unknown:** *Mr Boddy* ***was murdered*** *in the billiard room* is preferable to *Someone murdered Mr Boddy in the billiard room.* The word *someone* really doesn't add information to the sentence. Unless you know who or what caused Mr. Boddy's death, there's no need to use the active voice.
- **The person or thing being acted upon deserves to be highlighted:** Even when the actor is known, you may occasionally want to emphasize the person or thing that was acted upon. *That innocent and generous man* ***was cut*** *down in the prime of his life by a cowardly miscreant, Colonel Mustard.* In the active voice form (*Cowardly miscreant Colonel Mustard cut down that innocent and generous man in the prime of his life*), Colonel Mustard, like all subjects, takes centre stage. The passive voice lets the acted-upon noun become the focus of the sentence.
- **The actor does not matter:** On the other hand, the actor may have secondary importance. Consider this sentence: *A specific lunar eclipse* ***cannot be observed*** *from everywhere on earth.* Now, look at this one: *All humans on earth* ***cannot observe*** *a specific lunar eclipse.* In the first sentence, the passive voice construction is more direct. The *observers* are not nearly as important as is the fact that eclipses are visible only from certain vantage points.
- **The document's purpose mandates the passive voice:** Scientific and technical papers often require the passive voice simply because the actors (those doing the actions) are the writers, and their writing rightly focuses on actions and results of study or experiments. If you read *Ten ccs of HCL* ***were poured*** *into a beaker,* you will correctly assume that the experimenters or their agents were the ones doing the pouring. Use of the active voice here (*Drs Johnson and Murphy poured ten ccs of HCL into a beaker*) diverts attention from the experiment itself. Instead of focusing on this step of the experiment, readers start imagining the experimenters at work—because the sentence puts them in the spotlight.

Think About It

- What makes the active voice preferable to the passive voice in most cases?
- Which passive sentences need to be active?
- Where should you purposefully use the passive voice in your writing?

Choosing between the active and passive forms of verbs can take some practice, but once you're comfortable with the two voices, you can express exactly what role your subject plays in any sentence.

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Choosing the Right Subject
Chapter 6: Lesson 8

A well-structured, correctly punctuated, grammatically impeccable sentence is not necessarily a strong sentence. To be truly effective, your sentence should be engaging, clear and concise. The most important step to writing sentences that keep readers engaged involves **choosing the right subject for each sentence**.

The subject of a sentence—the noun, noun phrase or pronoun that is either doing something or being something—helms that sentence. Whatever you choose as the subject of a sentence will be in the spotlight, in command. For this reason, when setting up your sentences, make sure that their subjects deserve that spotlight.

Abstract vs. Concrete Subjects

If the spotlight shines on an **abstract noun** rather than a **concrete** one, you risk writing a lacklustre, uninvolving sentence.

A concrete noun denotes something that can be sensed (seen, heard, smelled, touched, tasted); an abstract noun denotes a concept or idea, something that most people can agree exists but which isn't a physical entity. Check out these examples:

- **Concrete:** heart, mayor, dentist, shark, bacterium, Eiffel Tower, Turkey, turkey, screwdriver, toddler, clock, ace of diamonds
- **Abstract:** love, politics, dentistry, species, infection, architecture, nationality, celebration, engineering, childhood, time, luck

Abstract nouns, which are often formed from verbs (*infect* and *infection*, *celebrate* and *celebration*), can be useful but tend to wither in the spotlight. Compare these two sentences:

- *The overabundance of abstractions being chosen as the subjects is responsible for sentences burdened with wordiness and a lack of involvement.*
- *When writers choose abstract nouns as subjects, their sentences are wordy and unengaging.*

Both sentences mean exactly the same thing, but the second version is shorter, livelier and more effective. The first sentence is all about *overabundance*; the second is all about people. The first may sound more elevated and more sophisticated since it uses a lot of long words, but it isn't. Most readers will have to read through it at least twice to figure out what the writer means. Good writing is clear, direct and uncluttered. Placing people, places or concrete things at the helm of a sentence will naturally result in a sharper, less wordy structure.

Another advantage is that choosing the right subject for a sentence often causes readers to think more deeply and in more detail about the point of that sentence. Compare these two sentences:

- ***Hilarity** dissipated when **a trick** was employed by Bertha's father to show her the **consequences** of poor **dental hygiene**.*
- *Bertha stopped laughing when her father blacked out his two front teeth to show her what would happen if she did not brush regularly.*

Note that putting a person (Bertha) in the spotlight forces the writer to provide more concrete details about what her father's teaching style actually was. He didn't just use 'a trick'. He actually fooled her into thinking his front teeth were missing! The second version is much more memorable—and much more concrete—than the first.

As shown above, sentences with concrete subjects tend to be more direct, engaging and full of illustrative detail than sentences with abstract subjects.

Abstract Nouns Can be the Right Subjects

Abstract nouns exist for a reason. If you want to write about a concept rather than about a specific example, then that concept should helm your sentence. When Emily Dickinson wrote

> *Hope is the thing with feathers*
> *That perches on the soul*

she was focusing on hope itself. She was inviting her readers to think about this thing—this intangible but very real thing—and she used the most direct, clear and engaging way to do it. If your sentence is truly about an abstract thing, then shine the spotlight on that thing.

Choose the Right Subject for Your Purpose

If you're writing an essay about a concept or idea or if you're defining a concept or idea in your work, chances are an abstract noun as a subject will suit your sentence well. In such cases, it's reasonable (and likely strong writing) to have that abstract noun, or a related one, as the sentence's subject. But

when you need to provide examples which illustrate your definition of that noun, you will naturally choose concrete subjects, as in this example:

- ***Personal integrity*** *involves living by strong moral principles, even when doing so is costly.* ***Parents*** *who lie about their home address in order to get their children into a better school may benefit in the short run, but their* ***children*** *will grow up believing that the ends justify the means.*

The first sentence is abstract because it's about a concept—personal integrity. In contrast, the second is concrete since it discusses topics that can be sensed—the parents and their children.

Or consider an essay that compares bassets and poodles. One body paragraph might begin this way:

- *For the older, more sedentary owner,* ***differences in temperament*** *make bassets clearly preferable to poodles.* ***Basset hounds*** *love to do two things: eat and sleep.* ***Poodles*** *are often too excited to do either.*

Here, the paragraph begins with an abstract focus on differences. It goes on to become more concrete and specific when it discusses each animal in turn.

Think About It

- Where should the spotlight shine as you choose appropriate subjects?
- Where do you need to adjust your sentences' subjects to become more concrete?
- Which subjects really do need to be abstract?

Keeping your readers engaged starts with the subjects of your sentences. Choosing the right subjects comes with some careful consideration on what needs to be the focus of each sentence. Whatever you choose, make it clear.

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Figurative Language
Chapter 6: Lesson 9

Do you have a favourite poem? What about a beloved song? Many of the most memorable songs and poems rely on *figurative language* to create powerful images and show us things in new ways. Consider these lines from one of Emily Dickinson's better-known poems:

> *'Hope' is the thing with feathers—*
> *That perches in the soul—*
> *And sings the tune without the words—*
> *And never stops—at all.*

Dickinson uses figurative language here to compare hope to a bird. You can use figurative language when you say something that's not exactly, literally, what you mean. In fact, figurative language is the spice of life. (That's a *metaphor*!) And the world would be a dull, empty place without it. (There's some *hyperbole*!) Generally speaking, figurative language consists of comparisons and exaggerations used in nonliteral ways.

Comparisons

Your writing becomes more interesting to readers when you show rather than tell, and comparisons are an effective way to show. Let's say you wish to describe a rowboat in a pond. You could write, *The rowboat drifted across the pond.*

Or, you could try figurative language (a *metaphor* in this case): *The tiny boat drifted across the pond, a leaf gently floating on the water.*

Get the picture? No, really, imagine the second example in your mind. What can you see? What image does it remind you of? That's the point of figurative language—to help readers see things or to see things differently. Figurative language in the form of comparisons isn't new either. The Beatles used them: *It's been a hard day's night, and I been working like a dog.*

Comparisons aren't just for stories or descriptions either. They work just as well in persuasive or expository writing. Let's say you're writing about a country's growing national debt:

- *The national debt is like an anvil poised above a flea.* (*simile*)
- *The national debt is an anchor threatening to drag the country under water.* (*metaphor*)

Figurative Language Instead of Modifiers

You often use adjectives and adverbs to describe. You might write that a sunset is *beautiful* (*adjective*) or that a kiss is *terribly* messy (*adverb*). But because these modifiers do not *show* us what the sunset looks like or how messy the kiss is, they aren't as effective as figurative language. Try replacing some modifiers with figurative language:

- *The glimmering horizon seemed to reach up and pull the setting sun toward it.*
- *The room looked like a clothing store and toy shop had crashed into each other.*

Exaggeration

Figurative language also works by exaggerating or understating. You've probably done it:

- *This suitcase weighs a ton.*
- *I'm starving!*
- *It's only a flesh wound.* (After suffering a serious injury)

Exaggeration (*hyperbole*) and *understatement* are effective because, just like comparisons, they show readers something in a new, unexpected way. Writing a reflection about an event that changed your life, you might use exaggeration like this: *I felt like my world had ended.*

Exaggeration isn't as effective in more formal writing, such as when you are conducting research or attempting to convince your reader of a certain concept or idea, because it may cause readers to question your credibility:

- *The national debt will turn everyone into poor peasants scraping by with almost nothing.*

This certainly creates a vivid picture, but a writer who exaggerates like this in a formal argument won't be taken seriously.

Bring It to Life

Along with comparisons and exaggeration, figurative language brings nonhuman things to life by giving them human qualities (*personification*). Again, writers can show readers something in a fresh way by including this type of figurative language:

- *The thick, black dirt seemed to dance and sing as the plough turned it over.*

Since soil neither dances nor sings, giving it these qualities provides readers with a new perspective on freshly ploughed dirt.

Like Dr Frankenstein, you can bring anything to life, making your writing more interesting:

- *The national debt has wrapped its fingers around the nation's throat.*

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- *My computer buzzed and whirred, trying its best to tell me that it was working as hard as it could.*

Problems With Figurative Language

Some comparisons stick around for so long that they become stale with overuse. If you've heard a phrase several times, it's best to find a new way to describe something. Here are some commonly **overused** examples of figurative language:

- *Black as night*
- *Blue as the sky*
- *Like a bull in a china shop*
- *Like a train wreck*
- *Like sand through an hourglass*
- *Raining cats and dogs*
- *Slept like a baby*
- *Dry as a desert*

Think About It

- What comparisons can you use to show your ideas in new ways?
- Where in your writing have you used adjectives that you could replace with figurative language?
- What overused comparisons do you need to replace in your writing?
- What are you trying to *tell* readers in your writing? Where can you *show* instead of *tell*?

Figurative language clarifies and amplifies meaning, keeping readers interested in your writing by presenting ideas in new ways.

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Appendix

Glossary of Writing Terms

Abstract: An abstract is a brief summary and description of a paper. It usually comes after a cover page, and it tends to be one or two brief paragraphs that outline what the paper discusses and its key points. Different formatting styles (APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian, Harvard) have different rules for abstracts, and different lecturers and/or universities may also have specific formatting requirements governing the formatting of abstracts.

Active Voice: A sentence written in active voice has a subject that directly performs an action. Active voice engages readers more effectively and is considered more direct than passive voice.

Adjective Clause: An adjective clause is a clause used to describe a noun or pronoun. *The driver in **whose car I was sitting** was surprised to see me there* includes an adjective clause.

Adverb Clause: An adverb clause is one used to describe a verb, a noun or an adjective. ***Wherever you go,*** *there you are* contains an adverb clause.

Annotated Bibliography: An annotated bibliography presents a list of sources much like a works cited or references page. However, it also includes a short (1-2-paragraph) annotation after each source. This annotation summarises the key concepts in the source and evaluates the credibility/quality of the source. If part of a larger research project, the annotations may also explain the source's relevance to the project.

Pearson

APA Style: APA style is a method of formatting papers and citing sources that's commonly used in the social and behavioural sciences.

Articles: In grammar, articles are a type of determiner and include the words *a, an* and *the*.

Audience: The audience for a piece of writing is the person(s) the writing is meant to address. Your audience helps determine how you present your ideas and how much you need to explain.

Author-Date System: The author-date system is one of two referencing systems within the Chicago/Turabian style. It uses parenthetical in-text references in combination with a references page.

Base Form: The base form of a verb is the verb in its simplest form, or the form you would look up in a dictionary. For example, the base form of *to be* is *be*, and the base form of *ran* is *run*.

Bibliography: A bibliography is an alphabetised list of sources that comes at the end of some papers, including those written in the author-date system. It includes sources that have been cited in-text, but it can also include sources you consulted but didn't directly cite.

Body Paragraph: Body paragraphs make up the majority of most essays. They each explore a single topic/idea that relates to the essay's main idea and/or thesis statement or provides other relevant information.

Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a technique for generating new ideas by writing down every thought as it occurs to you. Since the purpose of brainstorming is to generate as many options as possible, no ideas are rejected. Put everything down so you can sort through it later.

Business Letter: A business letter is a formal letter meant to respectfully state your thoughts, observations or experiences to a representative of a company concerning that company, its employees, its products or its services.

Chicago/Turabian Style: Chicago/Turabian style is a method of formatting papers and citing sources that's commonly used in disciplines like history, arts and the humanities. It's also common in the publishing industry.
Citation: A citation refers to in-text referencing when a source is quoted, paraphrased or summarised. Citation styles vary based upon the referencing format (e.g., Harvard, APA) you have been asked to use.

Clause: A clause is a group of words that has a noun (subject) and a verb (also called a predicate). *James lost his shoes* is an example of a clause as is *which he was currently wearing*.

Clustering: Clustering is a prewriting practice that leads you to visually organise ideas using circles, lines and any other shapes you chose.

Comma Splice: A comma splice is a grammar error that happens when two independent clauses (complete sentences) are joined with only a comma, as in *Jennifer went hiking, she saw a bear.*

Complete Predicate: A complete predicate contains a verb and other words, including objects and modifiers, as in *The player* ***leapt for the ball at last*.**

Conclusion: A conclusion is the paragraph or paragraphs at the end of an essay that wrap up the writer's ideas and provide closure. Many conclusions restate the main idea of the paper and revisit the most important supporting ideas. They often include information about the importance or implications of the paper's topic.

Context: Context is background information that helps a reader understand something. It might be historical information, a description of a current situation or a brief statement of relevant facts. It can also be the situation/setting in which a piece of writing will be used.

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Coordinate Adjectives: Coordinate adjectives are two or more adjectives used to describe the same noun. They require a comma between them, as in *The* ***old, dirty*** *shirt rested on the floor.*

Coordinating Conjunction: A coordinating conjunction is a joining word that connects similar parts of a sentence, such as items in a list or (with the help of a comma) two independent clauses. There are seven coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. Readers often use the term FANBOYS to remember these seven coordinating conjunctions.

Correlative Conjunctions: Correlative conjunctions work in pairs to join similar items. *Either/or* and *not only/but also* are examples of correlative conjunctions.

Credible Source: A credible source is one that you can reasonably trust to be accurate and honest. When considering credibility, awareness of the author's bias and accuracy is very important.

Critical Reading: When you practise critical reading, you make judgements about the text and analyse the choices and ideas that the author presents.

Dependent Clause: Dependent clauses have a noun (subject) and verb (predicate), but they cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. These clauses often include a connecting word that links them to an independent clause. Dependent clauses can also act like a part of speech, taking the place of a noun, adjective or adverb. *When I went outside* is an example of a dependent clause.

Determiner: Determiners are words that come before nouns and mark traits like number and possession, such as *more, every* and *my*.

Digital Portfolio: A digital portfolio is a collection of your work as a writer or creator that shows your progress over time, using links to demonstrate your growth in different areas. Digital portfolios may be required for some units of study, program completion and certain types of employment.

Draft: A draft is a version of a piece of writing. Early drafts tend to be full of ideas that need revision and structure, and later drafts take those ideas and develop them into more complete papers.

Editing: Editing a paper involves altering sentences and phrases so they are more understandable and accessible to improve how smoothly and clearly the paper reads.
Essay: An essay is a piece of writing meant to inform or persuade the reader. The exact characteristics depend on the assignment task.

Essential Element: An essential element (also called a restrictive element) is a phrase or clause that's required for the sentence to be understood, as in *The tes* ***that was scheduled for Saturday*** *has been cancelled.* Essential elements aren't separated from the main sentence by commas.

First Person: First-person point of view is a writing style that makes the writer part of the text, as in ***I*** *went outside*. While some academic assignments may allow or even require the use of first person, such as reflective writing, most discourage it.

Freewriting: Freewriting is the practice of writing without considering phrasing, diction or organisation. The purpose of freewriting is to force the writer to quickly and naturally generate ideas that can be developed and refined later.

Gerund: A gerund is a noun made by adding ***-****ing* to the end of a verb; a gerund may look like a verb form but doesn't function as one. The word *running* is a gerund in the sentence ***Running*** *keeps the heart healthy.*

Header: A header is additional information that appears at the top of each page in a paper. Different style guides, like MLA and APA, have different rules for what information belongs in the header.

Helping Verbs: Helping verbs are needed to express complex information about the time or mood of the main verb. *I* ***must*** *find my dog* and *We* ***are*** *running out of time* both feature helping verbs.

Independent Clause: Independent clauses have a noun (subject) and verb (predicate) and can stand alone as a complete sentence, as in *Susan tossed her keys on the ground.*

In-Text Citation/Reference: An in-text reference serves as an introductory reference to a source that has been quoted or paraphrased within a work. These references appear in the body of the text itself, directing readers to the more complete publication information in the bibliographic list at the end of the work. The exact rules for referencing depend on your referencing style (MLA, APA, etc.)

Introduction: An introduction is an opening paragraph or paragraphs that set the context for an essay's topic. They typically give some background information about the topic and include a controlling/main idea, usually expressed in a thesis statement. Some introductions also use attention-grabbing techniques, like quotes or surprising statistics, to help interest the reader in the topic.

Introductory Element: An introductory element is additional information at the beginning of a sentence that isn't part of the main idea or point of the sentence. It generally requires a comma separating it from the main clause. ***After the storm,*** *all the trees were uprooted* has an introductory phrase.

Inverted Pyramid: The inverted pyramid technique is a way of writing introductions that begins with general information about your topic and becomes more specific as the introduction continues.

Journaling: Journaling is the practice of keeping notes about your thoughts, reactions and ideas so you can use them in assignments.

Keyword: Keywords are terms (often from thesis statements and topic sentences) that relate to important concepts or topics within a paper. They are also terms you can type into search engines when researching for a topic or topics you wish to write about.

Linking Verbs: Linking verbs connect a sentence's subject to a word in the predicate that completes the subject's meaning. *Quinn* ***was*** *captain of the ship* and *Damien* ***appears*** *quite tired* both feature linking verbs.

Literary Analysis: Literary analyses closely examine one or more works (including short stories, novels and other creative works) and make a claim about that work. The nature of the claim can vary greatly from paper to paper, but it usually includes an interpretation or arguable ideas as its main idea, often expressed in a thesis statement, rather than a direct statement of fact or simple description. It incorporates quotes and paraphrased material from the work(s) to support this central claim. The Colour of Magic *uses characterisation and symbolism to explore the absurdity of oblivious first-world travellers* could be the thesis statement for a literary analysis.

Literary Device: A literary device is a technique that an author uses, such as setting, imagery, characterisation, symbolism or irony, to convey a theme or to make the writing more vivid or effective.

Literature Review: A literature review discusses the ideas and findings of a variety of credible sources on a given topic. It usually serves to give the readers an idea of what has been studied and understood up to this point. Although sometimes created as stand-alone documents, literature reviews are also found in longer reports or papers in which the writer will also include new information or analysis on the topic.

Memo: Formally called memorandums, memos are short, direct business notes that communicate essential information about a topic.

Mind Map: A mind map is a prewriting practice that leads you to visually connect ideas and develop relationships between concepts.

MLA Style: MLA style is a method of formatting papers and citing sources that's commonly used in humanities courses.

Nominative Pronoun: A nominative pronoun can act as the subject of a clause, as in ***She*** *found the map.*

Nonessential Element: A nonessential element (also called a non-restrictive element) is a phrase that isn't required for the sentence to be understood, as in *Tomorrow's event,* ***which many people were anticipating,*** *has been cancelled.* Nonessential elements need to be separated from the main sentence by commas.

Notes System: The notes system is one of two referencing systems within the Chicago/Turabian style. It uses superscript numbers with footnotes or endnotes in combination with a bibliography to cite sources.

Noun Clause: A dependent clause that acts as a noun is called a noun clause. ***Whoever finishes the test first*** *will get five extra points* is a sentence with a noun clause.

Objective Pronoun: Objective pronouns act as the object of a verb or a preposition, as in *The last question caused* ***him*** *to falter.*

Organisational/Corporate Author: An organisational or corporate author refers to an entire organisation that composes a source, in contrast to a single author or group of authors. As such, the organisation itself is treated as the author. Documents produced by government agencies, businesses and large academic organisations often have an organisational/corporate author.

Paper Unity: Paper unity occurs when the ideas in a paper are all related by a common purpose or topic with every idea being relevant to the main idea.

Paragraph Unity: Paragraph unity happens when the information in a single paragraph is all related to the main topic of that paragraph. Unified paragraphs help readers see how ideas are related.

Paraphrase: To paraphrase is to rephrase something from a source using your own words. When you paraphrase, you keep the ideas/information from the source but use your own phrasing. For papers written in MLA style and Chicago/Turabian, paraphrased material needs to be referenced in-text every bit as much as direct quotations. However, for APA-style papers, a signal phrase is sufficient if readers can easily locate the paraphrased material within its original source. If readers are likely to need help locating the original information in the source, add the in-text reference.

Participles: Participles are adjectives made from verbs, as in *a* ***running*** *man*, *those* ***blossoming*** *flowers,* an ***annoyed*** *parent,* or *the* ***lost*** *child.*

Passive Voice: The passive voice involves someone or something acting upon the subject of a sentence. It must include a *to be* verb and a past participle, as in *The game* ***was lost*** *yesterday*.

Point of View: In writing, point of view determines the kind of pronouns that are used. The main points of view are first, second or third person.

Possessive Pronoun: Possessive pronouns show ownership, as in *his, hers, their* and *our.*

Predicate: A predicate is the verb and related words that express the action or state of being of the clause's subject, as in *She* ***walked*** and *The cat* ***was asleep***.

Primary Source: A primary source is a document, object, communication or other material from the time period or issue you're studying. This can be anything from original research you've done to a novel you're writing about.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement: Pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when a pronoun and the noun it refers back to match in number, as in ***John*** *couldn't remember where* ***he*** *left his keys*. When pronouns lack agreement with their nouns, errors result, as in *If a* ***student*** *misses class,* ***they*** *will have to make up the test on the following day.*

Proofread: Proofreading is a careful examination of a draft to find typos, missing words, misspellings and other surface-level errors.

Proposal: Proposals suggest a course of action in a business or academic setting. Although the content varies depending on the proposal type, they usually outline the work or research to be done, how it will be done, who will do it and the overall purpose of the work/research.

Purpose: The purpose of a piece of writing reflects the overall goal of the writer. A few common purposes are to persuade, inform, describe, compare and analyse.

Quote: A quote is taken directly from a source, word-for-word. Short quotes need to be enclosed in quotation marks: 'This is a sample quote'. They also need to be cited within the text, following rules from the referencing style (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian, Harvard) that the paper is using.

Reflective Writing: Reflective writing tasks encourage students to write about personal growth or learning, often developed through an academic course or meaningful experience. While individual assignments and content vary in reflective writing, it typically requires the writer to use first person pronouns, like *I*, *me*, *we* and *us*.

Reflexive Pronoun: A reflexive pronoun functions as the object of a verb in a sentence in which the subject is the same as the object, as in *I looked in the mirror and saw* ***myself.***

Reference: A reference refers to the bibliographical entry that provides extended information about the sources you have used in your writing. The type of information and format of the information varies based upon the referencing style (e.g., Harvard, APA) you have been asked to use for your assignment.

Reference Page: A reference page is an alphabetised list of every source cited within a paper as well as additional publishing information about each source. Refer to the formatting style (e.g., Harvard, APA) you have been asked to use to determine how to format and title the references page.

Revise: Revising a paper or project means to engage in-depth with an essay's content to rewrite another draft of it. Doing so lets you introduce new ideas and ways of organising and presenting information.

Run-on Sentence: A run-on sentence is a grammar error that happens when two otherwise complete sentences are joined without the proper punctuation and joining words, as in *Terry left the door open the cats got out*. The sentence should read *Terry left the door open****, so*** *the cats got out.*

Secondary Source: A secondary source comments on or analyses a primary source. An academic paper discussing symbolism in a novel would be an example of a secondary source.

Second Person: Second-person point of view puts the reader directly into the text, as in ***You*** *must measure the board twice before cutting*. It's sometimes used in creative writing and when giving instructions. While it may be allowed for some assignments, most academic writing discourages the use of second person.

Sentence Fragment: A sentence fragment is a series of words that are presented as a complete sentence but that can't stand on its own. The three main causes of sentence fragments are missing subjects, missing predicates and dependent clauses that aren't paired with an independent clause.

Supporting Details: Supporting details are usually found in body paragraphs. They provide additional information like details, evidence and examples to help support the topic sentence and ensure readers understand what the paragraph is about.

Simple Predicate: A simple predicate is a predicate made up of only verbs and joining words, as in *The fire* ***sputtered and died*****.**

Source: A source is a piece of written or recorded information that you use to support your ideas in a paper. Scholarly journals, news articles, movies, websites, and virtually any other form of media can be used as a source. Of course, not all sources of information are trustworthy, and most assignments require that your sources be credible, so choose your sources carefully.

Style: Style refers to how you arrange your words and compose your ideas; it's how you convey the substance of your story.

Subject: The subject is the noun(s) or pronoun(s) either performing an action or being described by the predicate, as in ***She** walked in the rain* and *The **cat** was asleep*.

Subject-Verb Agreement: Subject-verb agreement occurs when the subject and verb match in number, as in ***Alice runs** quickly* and *The **students run** quickly*. Lack of subject-verb agreement is a common grammar error.

Subordinating Conjunction: A subordinating conjunction is a joining word that connects dissimilar parts of a sentence. Subordinating conjunctions often begin dependent clauses. *While*, *despite* and *because* are common subordinating conjunctions, but there are many more.

Supporting Points: Supporting points are the major ideas that help give your claim credibility. A paper arguing for a lower speed limit on highways might have supporting points like *it will reduce the number of accidents* and *it will result in fewer serious injuries when accidents do happen*.

Thesis Statement: A thesis statement is one or more sentences that express the main idea that you are trying to explain, prove or discuss in your essay. After reading a thesis statement, a reader should understand what a paper is about and what you are planning to say about the topic.

Third Person: Third-person point of view talks about other people and things without directly referring to either the writer or reader, as in *The **researchers** collected data* or ***They** chose to release it all at once.* Third person is the most common point of view for most academic writing.

Tone: Tone represents how something is written based on the author's attitude about his or her topic. It reflects what the author thinks and wants to convey about that topic.

Topic: Your topic is what your paper is about. You might begin with a general topic like *the environment* and then move to a more specific topic like *how recycling reduces pollution*.

Topic Sentence: A topic sentence begins a body paragraph by introducing the topicof that paragraph.

Transitions: Transitions are words and phrases that help readers move smoothly from one idea to another. They can often be found in topic sentences, but they can also be used to show the relationship between two pieces of information within a single paragraph. *First of all, despite this* and *at the same time* are all examples of transitions.

Verb Tense: Verb tense determines when a verb happens in time. While there are many different tenses, they largely indicate whether something **happened** in the past, **happens** in the present or **will happen** in the future.

Verb Tense Error: This kind of error occurs when a writer uses a verb tense that does not match the timeframe that is being described. For example, in the sentence, *I **walked** outside and **see** my neighbour on her porch,* the verb 'see' is present tense. Instead, it should be past tense because the error happened in the past.

Voice: Voice is the individual writing style that makes each author unique. Voice comes from choices about subject matter and ways of approaching a topic. Devices like sentence length, rhythm and word choice contribute to a writer's voice.

Works Cited: This page contains a list of sources that comes at the end of MLA-style essays. It includes the title, *Works Cited* (without italics), centred at the top and, below that, an alphabetical list of every source cited in the text, as well as additional information about each source.

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Top 10 Mechanical Concerns

The corrections modelled below can guide you as you edit for similar sentence-level concerns in your own writing.

1. Commas After Introductory Elements

Placing a comma after an introductory word, phrase or clause enables your reader to understand where that sentence element ends and your main clause begins.

Introductory Word
Incorrect: ***Historically*** *master thief Marco Meloni has resisted the idea of working with other criminals.*
Revised: ***Historically****, master thief Marco Meloni has resisted the idea of working with other criminals.*

Introductory Phrase
Incorrect: ***Meeting the very adept El Jalapeno*** *Marco agrees to collaborate on the ultimate heist—the theft of the mammoth Pink Tiger chili pepper.*
Revised: ***Meeting the very adept El Jalapeno****, Marco agrees to collaborate on the ultimate heist—the theft of the mammoth Pink Tiger chili pepper.*

Introductory Series of Prepositional Phrases
Incorrect: ***Through a skylight of the Empire Pepper plant*** *the thieving pair lower a climbing rope.*
Revised: ***Through a skylight of the Empire Pepper plant****, the thieving pair lower a climbing rope.*

Introductory Clause
Incorrect: ***As Marco begins his descent into the factory*** *the security alarm blares.*
Revised: ***As Marco begins his descent into the factory****, the security alarm blares.*

2. Comma Splices

The comma that joins two independent clauses into a comma splice creates an inadequate pause that causes the sentence's complete ideas to run together in a confusing manner. You can edit this sentence structure in different ways based on your intended meaning. Replacing the comma with a full stop creates two distinct ideas. Joining the independent clauses with a semicolon or combining them into a compound or complex sentence allows you to express a closer or clearer relationship between them.

Incorrect: *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof, his*** *leather gloves begin to slip downward.*

Full Stop
Revised: *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof. His*** *leather gloves begin to slip downward.*

Semicolon
Revised: *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof; his*** *leather gloves begin to slip downward.*

Compound Sentence
Revised (with coordinating conjunction): *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof, but*** *his leather gloves begin to slip downward.*
Revised (with semicolon and conjunctive adverb): *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof; however, his*** *leather gloves begin to slip downward.*

Complex Sentence
Revised (turning one independent clause into a dependent clause): ***Though*** *Marco reaches up instinctively to return to the* ***roof, his*** *leather gloves begin to slip downward.*

3. Run-on Sentences
A run-on sentence fuses independent clauses into a single sentence without an appropriate punctuation mark or conjunction. You can use a full stop between the two sentences to set boundaries, or you can use one of the other options mentioned below.

Incorrect: *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope he*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*

Full Stop
Revised: *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope. He*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*

Semicolon
Revised: *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope; he*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*

Compound Sentence
Revised (with coordinating conjunction): *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope, for he*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*
Revised (with semicolon and conjunctive adverb): *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope; undoubtedly, he*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*

Complex Sentence
Revised (turning one independent clause into a dependent clause): *El Jalapeno is pouring hot pepper oil down the* ***rope because he*** *wants to escape by forcing Marco's capture.*

4. Sentence Fragments
A sentence fragment is missing part of the structure it needs to express a complete idea. Editing this incorrect sentence structure involves adding the absent information—a subject (*noun*); a predicate (*verb*); or, in the case of a dependent clause, an independent clause that makes it part of a stand-alone sentence.

Missing Subject (*Noun*)
Incorrect: *Silently curses his faithless collaborator.*
Revised: ***Marco*** *silently curses his faithless collaborator.*

Missing Predicate (*Verb*)
Incorrect: *El Jalepeno's shadowy form away from the frame of the skylight.*
Revised: *El Jalepeno's shadowy form* ***backs*** *away from the frame of the skylight.*

Dependent Clause
Incorrect: *As he watches El Jalapeno recede.*
Revised: *As he watches El Jalapeno recede,* ***Marco is sure that the villain's outline glows with a spicy aura.***

5. Commas Before Coordinating Conjunctions in Compound Sentences
When you insert a comma before the coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence, you enable the reader to see and understand both independent clauses that comprise it.

Incorrect: *El Jalapeno has faded from above* ***so*** *Marco turns his gaze downward.*
Revised: *El Jalapeno has faded from above****, so*** *Marco turns his gaze downward.*
Incorrect: *A woman in a police uniform stands at the foot of the climbing rope* ***and*** *beneath the brim of her cap, her eyes flicker in anticipation.*
Revised: *A woman in a police uniform stands at the foot of the climbing rope****, and*** *beneath the brim of her cap, her eyes flicker in anticipation.*

Note, the rules governing this vary. If you are joining two relatively simple sentences (for instance, in the first example) that a reader will likely easily follow without the comma, you may omit this comma; however, it would not be incorrect to include it if you're unsure how the reader will perceive the sentence. If the sentences are lengthy or complex (as in the second), it's best to include a comma before the coordinating conjunction that falls between them so the reader can easily follow the ideas.

6. Subject-Verb Agreement
You should pair a singular subject with a singular verb and a plural subject with a plural verb. *Compound subjects*, which consist of two or more nouns joined by coordinating conjunctions, apply the same essential rule: A compound subject joined by *and* is considered plural and takes a plural verb. When the nouns of a compound subject are joined by *or* or *nor,* the verb should agree in number with the part of the subject closer to it.

Singular Subject
Incorrect: *Marco's* ***heart race*** *faster.*
Revised: *Marco's* ***heart races*** *faster.*

Plural Subject with Information Between Subject and Verb
Incorrect: *The shrill* ***tones*** *from the alarm* ***seems*** *to grow louder.*
Revised: *The shrill* ***tones*** *from the alarm* ***seem*** *to grow louder.*

Compound Subject Joined with *And*
Incorrect: ***Anxiety and fear fills*** *Marco's chest.*
Revised: ***Anxiety and fear fill*** *Marco's chest.*

Compound Subject Joined With *Or*
Incorrect: ***Tears or sweat flood*** *his eyes.*
Revised: ***Tears or sweat floods*** *his eyes.*
Revised: ***Sweat or tears flood*** *his eyes.*

7. Inconsistent Verb Tense
When you're discussing a specific time period, such as the present or past, using verbs that reflect that time frame helps your reader follow along. Change your verb tenses only if you are describing actions that occur in different periods of time.

Necessary Present Tense
Incorrect: *Marco now* ***blinks*** *and* ***observed*** *the officer's smile.*
Revised: *Marco now* ***blinks*** *and* ***observes*** *the officer's smile.*

Necessary Past Tense
Incorrect: *Ten years in the past, he* ***encounters*** *a woman who* ***flashed*** *this same smile.*
Revised: *Ten years in the past, he* ***encountered*** *a woman who* ***flashed*** *this same smile.*

Appropriate Tense Shift
Incorrect: *Today, as he* ***dangles*** *above her, he* ***remembers*** *when they* ***meet*** *in a truffle vault so long ago.*
Revised: *Today, as he* ***dangles*** *above her, he* ***remembers*** *when they* ***met*** *in a truffle vault so long ago.*

8. Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement
The English language is a living thing, and, like all living things, it changes over time. Though in the past it was ***incorrect*** to use the pronoun *they* when referring to a single person in a sentence, writers

now have a variety of pronoun options that still agree with the antecedents they replace (male, female or non-binary and gender non-conforming). While 'they' has long been considered a plural pronoun, many style guides now allow the use of 'they' as a singular pronoun for this reason. Still, the simplest way to ensure that you use inclusive pronouns and remain sensitive to others is to use a plural noun and pronoun.

- ***Students*** *may resubmit* ***their*** *drafts for a second review.*

If you are unable to use a plural antecedent, check with your lecturer to determine if it is appropriate to use 'they' as a singular pronoun if you wish to do so.

Number
To agree in *number*, a pronoun and its antecedent should both be singular or plural (which now includes the gender neutral/non-binary singular use of *they*).

Masculine Singular: *The* ***principal*** *attended the conference where* ***he*** *learned ways to improve* ***his*** *approach to discipline*.

Feminine Singular: *The* ***principal*** *attended the conference where* ***she*** *learned ways to improve* ***her*** *approach to discipline*.

Gender Neutral or Non-Binary Singular: *The* ***principal*** *attended the conference where* ***they*** *learned ways to improve* ***their*** *approaches to discipline*.

Plural: *The* ***principals*** *attended the conference where* ***they*** *learned ways to improve* ***their*** *approaches to discipline*.

Gender
To agree regarding *gender*, the pronoun should match the antecedent's gender (or gender identity), meaning male, female or gender neutral/non-binary.

Male: ***Jack*** *found* ***himself*** *without a sled after the biggest snowfall in years*.
Female: ***Rita*** *found* ***herself*** *without a sled after the biggest snowfall in years*.

Gender Neutral or Non-Binary: ***Marc*** *found* ***themselves*** *without a sled after the biggest snowfall in years*.

Person
To agree in *person*, make sure that the pronoun is taking a form appropriate for its antecedent. If it refers to a person, use a personal pronoun such as *he/she/they*. If the antecedent is an object, use *it/they*.

Incorrect: *Renee checked, and* ***the school*** *lists courses for* ***her*** *entire academic year*.
Revised: *Renee checked, and* ***the school*** *lists courses for* ***its*** *entire academic year*.

9. Apostrophe Placement in Singular and Plural Possessive Nouns
The appropriate use of apostrophes keeps a reader from confusing plural and possessive nouns. To create the possessive form of a singular noun or of a plural noun that does not end in *-s*, you should add an apostrophe and an *-s.* When a plural noun already ends in *-s,* form the possessive by adding an apostrophe after the *-s.*

Singular Possessive
Incorrect: *Marco emerges from his reverie to realise that his rope has become as slick as a* ***firemans*** *pole; the dangling* ***criminals*** *grip can no longer hold.*
Revised: *Marco emerges from his reverie to realise that his rope has become as slick as a* ***fireman's*** *pole; the dangling* ***criminal's*** *grip can no longer hold.*

Plural Possessive
Incorrect: *Aided by the* ***glove's*** *oily palms, Marco manages a swashbuckling descent that*

would cause all ***womens'*** *hearts—not just that of his lady love—to swell.*
Revised: *Aided by the* ***gloves'*** *oily palms, Marco manages a swashbuckling descent that would cause all* ***women's*** *hearts—not just that of his lady love—to swell.*

10. Inconsistent Point of View

An essay's point of view should reflect its purpose and tone and the way they influence your need to direct the reader's attention to the writer (*first person*), the audience (*second person*), or the essay's driving ideas (*third person*). Third person is usually preferred for objective, academic writing. Unless the meaning of a sentence requires a change in perspective, you should keep point of view consistent to keep a reader's focus consistent.

Shift Between First and Third Person

Incorrect: *The wifely embrace into which Marco finally settles makes* ***the storyteller*** *certain of the moral of* ***my*** *tale.*
Revised (first person): *The wifely embrace into which Marco finally settles makes* ***me*** *certain of the moral of* ***my*** *tale.*
Revised (third person): *The wifely embrace into which Marco finally settles makes* ***the storyteller*** *certain of the moral of* ***this*** *tale.*

Shift Between Second and Third Person

Incorrect: ***One*** *cannot predict who will be* ***your*** *most faithful partner.*
Revised (second person): ***You*** *cannot predict who will be* ***your*** *most faithful partner.*
Revised (third person): ***One*** *cannot predict who will be* ***his or her*** *most faithful partner.*

Common Homophones and Homonyms

accept/except	fair/fare	poor/pore/pour
advice/advise	for/fore	principal/principle
aid/aide	grate/great	profit/prophet
aisle/isle	hear/here	rap/wrap
allusion/illusion	its/it's	role/roll
altar/alter	know/no	sail/sale
bare/bear	lead/led	scene/seen
base/bass	lessen/lesson	seam/seem
brake/break	maid/made	shear/sheer
buy/by/bye	miner/minor	soar/sore
capital/capitol	one/won	son/sun
cent/scent/sent	pail/pale	stair/stare
cite/sight/site	pair/pare/pear	stake/steak
complement/compliment	paced/paste	stationary/stationery
council/counsel	passed/past	team/teem
discreet/discrete	patience/patients	threw/through
dual/duel	peace/piece	tide/tied
elicit/illicit	plain/plane	waist/waste
eminent/imminent/immanent	miner/minor	weather/whether/rather

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