A Dam Good Argument

A DAM GOOD ARGUMENT

Persuasive Writing at Oregon State University

COLLECTED WORKS

Oregon State University

Corvallis, OR

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PART I.

INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENT AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

CHAPTER 1.

WELCOME TO ANOTHER WRITING CLASS!

Or, Why the &%# Am I Taking Writing Again?*

ROB DRUMMOND

Let's begin by being real with each other: you're probably in this class because you have to be. It fulfills a gen ed writing requirement you need to graduate, and you wouldn't be here otherwise. And there is a good chance you're not absolutely thrilled about it.

That's OK. I think I understand, but let me take a stab at some of your potential reactions to finding yourself in this writing class this term:

- You're in kinesiology, business, psychology, dentistry, nursing, and so on, and you're *absolutely* ***positive*** you won't be doing any writing in your future professional life. This class is just one more hoop to jump through in your undergrad career, one more time the university takes your money through no choice of yours, slowing your progress through your major and toward that sweet j-o-b waiting at the end of it.

- And/or maybe you feel you've already taken a gazillion writing classes since you started school, which has only ever meant writing boring essays about *Romeo and Juliet* or *Animal Farm* or, even worse, poetry. The only thing you *actually* learned about writing in those classes was that your job as a student was to figure out a particular writing teacher's Secret Writing Formula and give it back to them, and you've done that plenty. So why do you have to do it again now, when you should be spending every class and dollar on your major that will lead to that j-o-b? Or worse still, those writing teachers' Secret Writing Formulas never seemed accessible to you, and you long ago threw up your hands in despair.

- Or you truly enjoyed your writing and literature courses—you may even possibly enjoy the act of writing (imagine!)—and, not for nothing, you feel like your writing is pretty darn good already, so you can't help but resent finding yourself in this required course among all these nonwriters because you already know all this stuff and more.

If any of these overlap with your feelings about being in this course, I get it. I also readily acknowledge that you might not fit neatly into any of these categories—one of the best things

about Oregon State University is that our students come from all different cultures and stages of life and scholastic and socioeconomic backgrounds. So instead of trying to identify all of your individual circumstances, let me state two things everyone reading this shares:

1. You've all made it this far somehow, jumping through hoop after writing-requirement hoop, and

2. Your schooling is much closer to its end than its beginning.

Which means, in your immediate future, there will be no more teachers to please or impress and no more Secret Writing Formulas to decipher and reproduce. For most of you, this class represents your last—and in a tragedy for another day, possibly your first and only—course devoted solely to writing in your undergraduate career. You are spiraling at full tilt toward the moment when you will never again receive any help or advice or instruction on anything you've written, and you obviously won't get a grade on it, either.

You may silently or openly cheer as you read those sentences. Good riddance to writing and the teachers who teach it! But consider that no matter your major or your career, the one thing you'll *still* have to do from time to time in your done-with-school life is try to convince someone to do a thing you want them to do. And I'm sorry to add that sometimes you'll have to do it in writing.

You will, in other words, petition gatekeepers to open their gates for you. And as you may already know, these moments tend to be rather high-stakes in our lives.

So there you are: you *really* need another person to do something for you, to give you something, to let you into something, or to stop doing something, but if you can't apply the elements of strong, clear, and moving argument-making to your writing in those high-stakes moments, this person or organization won't just give you a C– and invite you to revise for a better grade.

They'll simply say *no*.

No, we're not giving you that raise. No, the city council rejects your proposal for a new business, thanks but no thanks for working on it for the last two years. No, we're not bringing you in for an interview for your dream job. Nope, you've failed to convince us that our grad school program is the right fit for you. No, you haven't convinced your uncle on social media to reconsider his stance on that far-out conspiracy theory, and the next family gathering is going to be a nightmare as a result. No, we're sorry to inform you that at this time, we are unable to fund your project; we received 374 more compelling and persuasive applications, and we have limited funds available. And no, I'd prefer not to marry you; I'm going to marry this other person who has proven far better at persuading me they will be a better roommate, partner, and coparent.

SKILLFUL PERSUASION IS HARD

So maybe take a pause on blindly celebrating that in ten short weeks, you'll be done with your life's writing instruction, and instead consider how little time you've spent in your schooling thinking about how to use your writing to get what you want, to get what you *need*.

Because when your cap and gown are in the rearview and you find yourself faced with a high-stakes writing task demanding that you move some powerful gatekeeper from a *no* to a crucial *yes*—your future, your happiness, your whole *life plan* depend on getting them to *yes*—you'll beg, borrow, and steal any concrete strategies that might work to persuade that powerful entity to open their specific gate to you.

Will you sometimes find yourself in situations that are more subtle and decidedly less "me versus them"? Absolutely and of course. But I find it refreshing and helpful at the outset to set aside academese and focus on stripped-down persuasion in its most basic form, simply getting that important person from no to yes.

The problem? Getting someone, anyone, from no to yes is, well, *hard*. Maybe you're thinking, "Oh, please, it can't be *that* hard. I've written five-page papers in two hours with my eyes closed countless times and still gotten As. I'll be just fine out there." But alas, your past successes at reproducing a teacher's Secret Writing Formula or BSing your way to an A in eleventh grade won't actually help as much as you might think. Believe it or not, real-life human beings can actually see right through that stuff pretty quickly. (And newsflash: your writing teachers saw through it too. They just kept it to themselves in the name of higher-order concerns.)

In fact, I bet you'll find that getting an acceptable grade on an essay is far easier than changing another person's mind in the real world. Why? Human beings don't like changing their minds. We like to think we know what we want and don't want, we believe what we believe, we are quite sure we know what's best for our company, our medical school, our city, our lives, and we don't much listen to folks who want to convince us of something to the contrary.

If you're still viewing this class as just one more course disconnected from the important work you'll be doing once you land that sweet j-o-b, let me be more direct: there is no job, and no life situation, that won't involve persuading folks in all sorts of ways all the time. This course is going to teach you how to perceive and address the needs of those people so that you can have a shot to persuade them successfully.

CATCH 'EM IN THE ACT

To persuade is, technically, to move your audience to action. And to do it well, it pays to notice how you yourself are moved to actions by external forces. Because despite how set we humans are in our ways, we're nonetheless constantly succumbing to the quietly effective arguments that come at us all day every day and implicitly move us to action, most of the time without our awareness.

So in this course and with this text, we'll pay attention. How has this social media platform gotten me back on the app fifteen minutes after I closed it, vowing I wouldn't open it again until morning? Why am I drinking this neon-blue beverage no human should rightly consider drinkable or watching thirty-one women fight for one man to marry in a period of weeks on my TV? Why am I voting for this person instead of that one or not voting at all? Why do I believe this should happen with guns and that should happen with vaccines? Did I just decide about these things of my own free will? (No.) Or did something quietly or not so quietly persuade me to do or think them? (Yes.)

If you enjoy being manipulated into believing and doing things you might not otherwise believe or do, things that are very often not in your best interest, then OK, great—you do you. Someone

has to fall for Ponzi schemes and keep the cable news networks on air. But if you want to start spotting the subtle and insidious persuasion tactics bombarding you constantly and shaping your actions and reactions before you catch them in the act (if you ever do), then pay attention, because once again, you've come to the right place.

Learning how to persuade entails understanding how you are persuad**ed**. That means understanding how these implicit forces work, how they necessarily play on your deeply held cultural values, often by merely reinforcing the unexamined assumptions you already hold. We *must* understand how those latent beliefs work, in ourselves and in the audiences we're trying to convince, if we want to learn the art of persuasion.

Which is a fancy way of saying that in this writing class, we're not just trying to recognize those savvy persuasion tactics; we're looking to *steal* them. Well, at least the ethical and sound tactics. Our goal will always be to identify, isolate, and snatch the tools being used to persuade us and turn them back around to persuade *them*.

So the questions you should be asking yourself now, while there's still time to practice, are these: When I am out there in the world trying to get a real person to shift their thinking subtly or simply to say yes instead of no, what works? What doesn't? What is vital? What is a deal breaker? What will kill my request before it's even made? And what brings it home?

I'm so glad you asked, because that's precisely where our writing class comes in: a nice little class focused solely on teaching you to do that very thing and nothing else.

No eight-page analysis of chapter 14 of *The Catcher in the Rye*, no two-thousand-word explication of a single sonnet, just, can you move that gatekeeper to the action you want to move them toward or not? Can you build an ethical, well-supported argument that evokes the necessary emotion at just the right time with just the right tone and style and support and logic to make the thing happen, or will you stay in that dead-end job until you die?

WRITING IS HARD

I hope I've at least opened the possibility that

- You are in fact going to have to write things in your postcollege future,
- The things you'll very often have to write will be attempts to persuade people to change their thinking and do a thing for you, and
- Persuasion is difficult, and we need all the practice we can get before we fly from our undergraduate nest.

You know what else is very difficult? Writing. Even harder? Writing well. And definitely writing well in support of getting that thing you want and need.

For proof that writing is hard, consider that there are few activities we procrastinate more than writing. Most people will use a toothbrush to clean the bathroom they share with six roommates sooner than tackle a high-stakes writing project; they will get two root canals and do their back taxes before they'll sit down to write a persuasive argument.

And that's for good reason. Our brains rebel from the blank page; the higher the stakes, the more our brains rebel. After all, the writing task demands all parts of the brain to kick into overdrive at once. You need logic; you need to consider the audience and the situation; you need to organize your thinking and translate that thinking to black symbols on a white page; you need to attend to the order and sequence of those black symbols in every way, from grammar to the active voice to transitions to openers and closers; you need research and citations and formatting and more. And at the exact same time, you need to activate the creative part of your brain; to write anything, no matter how boring, is truly an act of creation, because the thing (an essay, a cover letter, a please-take-me-back-I'm-so-sorry email) literally doesn't exist until you create it. It's just you and that blank page and your cursor taunting you with every blink. And because none of us are born writers, you have to work at it. You have to *practice*.

And here again, like magic, you find yourself in a class equally devoted to that challenging enterprise. So while our thematic focus in this writing class is persuasion and argumentation, we're also, of course, focused on your writing itself—voice, tone, style, concision, precision, all of it.

What follows in this text on your screen is about half-and-half: half devoted to analyzing our own and others' persuasion techniques and half to writing strategies—and all about their constant and necessary overlap. We are going to infuse you with tools to take on that blank page with laser-focused, tried-and-true strategies and, crucially, with an added dose of confidence: "I know I have the necessary tools in my bag to move through this prewriting anxiety phase and produce something that will be, after revision, not just well written but also highly persuasive."

We've curated this text for this class at Oregon State specifically. And not for nothing, your instructor has devoted their professional life to helping people write well. If you want to get your money's worth this term or if you just want to stick it to the powers that be as you jump through this particular hoop, why not take full advantage of these two resources at your disposal while you still can?

THE REAL RIP-OFF

So to return to the top and your objections to having to take this writing class, consider that the real rip-off is not that you are forced to take this one ten-week course but rather that this is the *only* course you get to develop these crucial skills you'll need for the rest of your life—at least if you want to get what you want and have a real shot at being happy.

So I invite you to tune in to this text with care and diligence while you can. Because while after this term you will never again have to write an argument of definition (or write about weird things like discourse communities or develop revisionist profiles or write a discussion board about catching rhetorical moves in the wild), you will without question encounter in your future personal and professional life multiple high-stakes writing tasks in which a very big chunk of your potential happiness or misery will depend keenly on your ability to move a crucial audience to action. And in those moments, you'll have to transfer everything you learn in this class to a task that is well outside your comfort zone. When that moment comes (repeatedly and sooner than you think), knowing how to read the rhetorical situation, determining exactly when to inject your plea with a dose of pathos and when to lean hard on logos, and figuring out just exactly how to address that daunting counterargument you can't necessarily defeat—either these skills will be there, in your pocket, ready to roll, or they won't.

And whether you have them at the ready will absolutely mean the difference between a no and the yes you *need*.

So read up. Listen well. Heed all the wisdom that comes out of your instructor's mouth, and maybe even a classmate or two. Practice. Ask questions. Stretch your brain and consider new approaches to drafting and researching. Revisit your good and bad writing habits, become mindful of the ways you procrastinate, make major and minor adjustments to your researching and argument-growing—in short, roll up your sleeves one more time, and soak up every drop of advice you can get.

Your future depends on it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What rhetorical strategies does the delusional author of this chapter use to persuade you that this class matters? Why do you think the author made these choices? Are they effective?
2. What have been your experiences with writing classes leading into this class? Do you resonate with this chapter's discussion of the Secret Writing Formula? How much effort have you had to put into getting a good grade in writing classes in the past?
3. Do you find persuasion difficult? How so? How do you get past those moments of writing stress or writer's block?
4. What are some ways that persuasion has worked on you, either explicitly or implicitly? What was the last time you found yourself doing something without exactly knowing why?

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CHAPTER 2.

WHAT DOES THE INSTRUCTOR WANT?

Understanding the Assignment

AMY GUPTILL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

WRITING FOR WHOM? WRITING FOR WHAT?

The first principle of good communication is knowing your audience. This is where writing papers for class gets kind of weird. As Peter Elbow explains,

> When you write for a teacher you are usually swimming against the stream of natural communication. The natural direction of communication is to explain what you understand to someone who doesn't understand it. But in writing an essay for a teacher your task is usually to explain what you are still engaged in trying to understand to someone who understands it better. (255)

Often when you write for an audience of one, you write a letter or email. But college papers aren't written like letters; they're written like articles for a hypothetical group of readers that you don't actually know much about. There's a fundamental mismatch between the real-life audience and the form your writing takes. It's kind of bizarre, really.

It helps to remember the key tenet of the university model: you're a junior scholar joining the academic community. Academic papers, in which scholars report the results of their research and thinking to one another, are the lifeblood of the scholarly world, carrying useful ideas and information to all parts of the academic corpus. Unless there is a particular audience specified in the assignment, you would do well to imagine yourself writing for a group of peers who have some introductory knowledge of the field but are unfamiliar with the specific topic you're discussing. Imagine them being interested in your topic but also busy; try to write something that is well worth your readers' time. Keeping an audience like this in mind will help you distinguish common knowledge in the field from that which must be defined and explained in your paper. Understanding your audience like this also resolves the audience mismatch that Elbow describes. As he notes, "You don't write *to* teachers, you write *for* them" (220).

Another basic tenet of good communication is clarifying the purpose of the communication and letting that purpose shape your decisions. Your professor wants to see you work through complex ideas and deepen your knowledge through the process of producing the paper. Each assignment—be it an argumentative paper, reaction paper, reflective paper, lab report,

discussion question, blog post, essay exam, project proposal, or what have you—is ultimately about your learning. To succeed with writing assignments (and benefit from them), you first have to understand their learning-related purposes. As you write for the hypothetical audience of peer junior scholars, you're demonstrating to your professor how far you've gotten in analyzing your topic.

Instructors don't assign writing lightly. Grading student writing is generally the hardest, most intensive work instructors do. You would do well to approach every assignment by putting yourself in the shoes of your instructor and asking yourself, "Why did they give me this assignment? How does it fit into the learning goals of the course? Why is this question/topic/problem so important to my instructor that they are willing to spend evenings and weekends reading and commenting on several dozen papers on it?"

Don't be scared whenever you are given an assignment. Professors know what it was like to be in college and write all kinds of papers. They aren't trying to make your lives difficult, but it is their job to make us think and ponder about many things. Take your time and enjoy the paper. Make sure you answer the question being asked rather than rant on about something that is irrelevant to the prompt.

TIMOTHÉE PIZARRO
writing student

Most instructors do a lot to make their pedagogical goals and expectations transparent to students: they explain the course learning goals associated with assignments, provide grading rubrics in advance, and describe several strategies for succeeding. Other instructors…not so much. Some students perceive more open-ended assignments as evidence of a lazy, uncaring, or even incompetent instructor. Not so fast! Instructors certainly vary in the quantity and specificity of the guidelines and suggestions they distribute with each writing assignment.

It is understandably frustrating when you feel you don't know how to direct your efforts to succeed with an assignment. However, except for rare egregious situations, you would do well to assume the best of your instructor and to appreciate the diversity of learning opportunities you have access to in college. Like one first-year student told Keith Hjortshoj, "I think that every course, every assignment, is a different little puzzle I have to solve. What do I need to do here? When do I need to do it, and how long will it take? What does this teacher expect of me?" (4). The transparency that you get from some professors—along with guides like this one—will be a big help to you in situations where you have to be scrappier and more proactive, piecing together the clues you get from your professors, the readings, and other course documents.

The Prompt: What Does "Analyze" Mean Anyway?

Often, the handout or other written text explaining the assignment—what instructors call the assignment prompt—will explain the purpose of the assignment, the required parameters (length, number and type of sources, referencing style, etc.), and the criteria for evaluation. Sometimes, though—especially when you are new to a field—you will encounter the baffling situation in which you comprehend every single sentence in the prompt but still have absolutely no idea how to approach the assignment. No one is doing anything wrong in a situation like that. It just means that further discussion of the assignment is in order. Here are some tips:

Focus on the verbs

Look for verbs like "compare," "explain," "justify," "reflect," or the all-purpose "analyze." You're not just producing a paper as an artifact; you're conveying, in written communication, some intellectual work you have done. So the question is, What kind of thinking are you supposed to do to deepen your learning?

Put the assignment in context

Many professors think in terms of assignment sequences. For example, a social science professor may ask you to write about a controversial issue three times: first, arguing for one side of the debate; second, arguing for another; and finally, arguing from a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective, incorporating text produced in the first two assignments. A sequence like that is designed to help you think through a complex issue. Another common one is a scaffolded research paper sequence: you first propose a topic, then prepare an annotated bibliography, then make the first draft, then make the final draft, and finally, perhaps, create a reflective paper. The preparatory assignments help ensure that you're on the right track, beginning the research process long before the final due date and taking the time to consider recasting your thesis, finding additional sources, or reorganizing your discussion. (Most instructors are perpetually frustrated with the "one-and-done" attitude that most students bring to their work, and some sequences are specifically designed to force you to really rethink your conclusions.)

If the assignment isn't part of a sequence, think about where it falls in the semester and how it relates to readings and other assignments. Are there headings on the syllabus that indicate larger units of material? For example, if you see that a paper comes at the end of a three-week unit on the role of the internet in organizational behavior, then your professor likely wants you to synthesize that material in your own way. You should also check your notes and online course resources for any other guidelines about the workflow. Maybe you got a rubric a couple of weeks ago and forgot about it. Maybe your instructor posted a link about "how to make an annotated bibliography" but then forgot to mention it in class.

Try a freewrite

When I hand out an assignment, I often ask students to do a five-minute or ten-minute freewrite. A freewrite is when you just write, without stopping, for a set period of time. That doesn't sound very "free"; it actually sounds kind of coerced. The "free" part is what you write—it can be whatever comes to mind. Professional writers use freewriting to get started on a challenging (or distasteful) writing task or to overcome writer's block or a powerful urge to procrastinate. The idea is that if you just make yourself write, you can't help but produce some kind of useful nugget. Thus, even if the first eight sentences of your freewrite are all variations on "I don't understand this" or "I'd really rather be doing something else," eventually you'll write something like "I guess the main point of this is…" and—booyah!—you're off and running. As an instructor, I've found that asking students to do a brief freewrite right after I hand out an assignment generates useful clarification questions. If your

instructor doesn't make time for that in class, a quick freewrite on your own will quickly reveal whether you need clarification about the assignment and, often, what questions to ask.

Ask for clarification the right way.

Even the most skillfully crafted assignments may need some verbal clarification, especially because students' familiarity with the field can vary enormously. Asking for clarification is a good thing. Be aware, though, that instructors get frustrated when they perceive that students want to skip doing their own thinking and instead receive an exact recipe for an A paper. Go ahead and ask for clarification, but try to convey that you want to learn and you're ready to work. In general, avoid starting a question with "Do we have to…" because I can guarantee that your instructor is thinking, "You don't have to do anything. You're an adult. You chose college. You chose this class. You're free to exercise your right to fail." Similarly, avoid asking the professor about what he or she "wants." You're not performing some service for the instructor when you write a paper. What they "want" is for you to really think about the material.

Table 2.1 Suggested alternatives to frequently asked (and potentially annoying) questions

Potentially annoying questions	Preferable alternatives
"I don't get it. Can you explain this more?" or "What do you want us to do?"	"I see that we are comparing and contrasting these two cases. What should be our focus? Their causes? Their impacts? Their implications? All of those things?" or "I'm unfamiliar with how art historians analyze a painting. Could you say more about what questions I should have in mind to do this kind of analysis?"
"How many sources do we have to cite?"	"Is there a typical range for the number of sources a well-written paper would cite for this assignment?" or "Could you say more about what the sources are for? Is it more that we're analyzing these texts in this paper, or are we using these texts to analyze some other case?"
"What do I have to do to get an A on this paper?"	"Could I meet with you to get feedback on my (preprepared) plans/outline/thesis/draft?" or "I'm not sure how to approach this assignment. Are there any good examples or resources you could point me to?"

RUBRICS AS ROAD MAPS

If an instructor provides a grading rubric with an assignment prompt, you can be sure that he or she will use it to grade your paper. He or she may not go over it in class, but it's the clearest possible statement of what the professor is looking for in the paper. If it's wordy, it may seem like those online "terms and conditions" that we routinely accept without reading. But you really should read it over carefully before you begin and again as your work progresses. A lot of rubrics do have some useful specifics. Mine, for example, often contain phrases like "makes at least six error-free connections to concepts or ideas from the course" or "gives thorough consideration to at least one plausible counterargument." Even less specific criteria (such as "incorporates course concepts" and "considers counterarguments") will tell you how you should be spending your writing time.

Even the best rubrics aren't completely transparent. They simply can't be. Take, for example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) rubric. It has been drafted and repeatedly revised by a multidisciplinary expert panel and tested multiple times on sample student work to ensure reliability. But it still seems kind of vague. What is the real difference between "demonstrating a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose" and "demonstrating adequate consideration" of the same? It depends on the specific context. So how can you know whether you've done that? A big part of what you're learning, through feedback from your professors, is to judge the quality of your writing for yourself. Your future bosses are counting on that. At this point, it is better to think of rubrics as road maps displaying your destination rather than GPS systems directing every move you make.

Behind any rubric is the essential goal of higher education: helping you take charge of your own learning, which means writing like an independently motivated scholar. Are you tasked with proposing a research paper topic? Don't just tell the professor what you want to do; convince him or her of the salience of your topic as if you were a scholar seeking grant money. Is it a reflection paper? Then outline both the insights you've gained and the intriguing questions that remain, as a scholar would. Are you writing a thesis-driven analytical paper? Then apply the concepts you've learned to a new problem or situation. Write as if your scholarly peers around the country are eagerly awaiting your unique insights. Descriptors like "thoroughness" or "mastery" or "detailed attention" convey the vision of student writers making the time and rigorous mental effort to offer something new to the ongoing, multistranded academic conversation. What your professor wants, in short, is critical thinking.

WHAT'S CRITICAL ABOUT CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking is one of those terms that has been used so often and in so many different ways that it often seems meaningless. It also makes one wonder, is there such a thing as uncritical thinking? If you aren't thinking critically, then are you even thinking?

Despite the prevalent ambiguities, critical thinking actually does mean something. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) usefully defines it as "a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion" ("Value Rubrics").

That definition aligns with the best description of critical thinking I ever heard; it came from my junior high art teacher, Joe Bolger. He once asked us, "What color is the ceiling?" In that withering tween tone, we reluctantly replied, "White." He then asked, "What color is it really?" We deigned to aim our preadolescent eyes upward and eventually began to offer more accurate answers: "Ivory?" "Yellowish tan." "It's gray in that corner." After finally getting a few thoughtful responses, Mr. Bolger said something like, "Making good art is about drawing what you see, not what you think you're supposed to see." The AAC&U definition above essentially amounts to the same thing: taking a good look and deciding what you really think rather than relying on the first idea or assumption that comes to mind.

The critical thinking rubric produced by the AAC&U describes the relevant activities of critical thinking in more detail. To think critically, you need to establish the question or problem, evaluate your sources, interrogate the assumptions informing the ideas you encounter, and develop a nuanced position that accounts for multiple perspectives ("Value Rubrics").

While you are probably used to providing some evidence for your claims, you can see that college-level expectations go quite a bit further. When professors assign an analytical paper, they don't just want you to formulate a plausible-sounding argument. They want you to dig into the evidence, think hard about unspoken assumptions and the influence of context, and then explain what you really think and why.

Interestingly, the AAC&U defines critical thinking as a "habit of mind" rather than a discrete achievement. And there are at least two reasons to see critical thinking as a craft or art to pursue rather than a task to check off. First, the more you think critically, the better you get at it. As you get more and more practice in closely examining claims, their underlying logic, and alternative perspectives on the issue, it'll begin to feel automatic. You'll no longer make or accept claims that begin with "Everyone knows that…" or end with "That's just human nature." Second, just as artists and craftspersons hone their skills over a lifetime, learners continually expand their critical-thinking capacities through both the feedback they get from others and their own reflections. Artists of all kinds find satisfaction in continually seeking greater challenges. Continual reflection and improvement are part of the craft.

Critical thinking is hard work. Even those who actively choose to do it experience it as tedious, difficult, and sometimes surprisingly emotional. Nobel Prize–winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman explains that our brains aren't designed to think; rather, they're designed to save us from having to think (44). Our brains are great at developing routines and repertoires that enable us to accomplish fairly complex tasks like driving cars, choosing groceries, and having conversations without thinking consciously and thoroughly about every move we make. Kahneman calls this "fast thinking." "Slow thinking," which is deliberate and painstaking, is something our brains seek to avoid. That built-in tendency can lead us astray. Kahneman and his colleagues often used problems like this one in experiments to gauge how people used fast and slow thinking in different contexts (44):

> A bat and ball cost $1.10.
> The bat costs one dollar more than the ball.
> How much does the ball cost?

Most people automatically say the ball costs $0.10. However, if the bat costs $1 more, then the bat would cost $1.10, leading to the incorrect total of $1.20. The ball costs $0.05. Kahneman notes, "Many thousands of university students have answered the bat-and-ball puzzle, and the results are shocking. More than 50% of students at Harvard, MIT, and Princeton gave the intuitive—incorrect—answer." These and other results confirm that "many people are overconfident, prone to place too much faith in their intuitions" (45). Thinking critically—thoroughly questioning your immediate intuitive responses—is difficult work, but every organization and business in the world needs people who can do that effectively. Some students assume that an unpleasant critical-thinking experience means either that they're doing something wrong or that it's an inherently uninteresting (and oppressive) activity. While we all relish those times when we're pleasantly absorbed in a complex activity, the more tedious experiences can also bring satisfaction, sort of like a good workout.

Critical thinking can also be emotionally challenging, researchers have found. Facing a new realm of uncertainty and contradiction without relying on familiar assumptions is inherently anxiety provoking because when you're doing it, you are, by definition, incompetent. The kind of critical thinking your professors are looking for—that is, pursuing a comprehensive,

multifaceted exploration in order to arrive at a debatable, nuanced argument—is inevitably a struggle, and it may be an emotional one. Your best bet is to find ways to make those processes as efficient, pleasant, and effective as you can.

The thing no one tells you when you get to college is that critical thinking papers are professors' favorites. College is all about learning how to think individual thoughts, so you'll have to do quite a few of them. Have no fear though; they do get easier with time. The first step? Think about what you want to focus on in the paper (a.k.a. your thesis) and go with it.

KAETHE LEONARD
writing student

The demands students face are not at all unique to their academic pursuits. Professional working roles demand critical thinking, and it's pretty easy to imagine how critical thinking helps one make much better decisions in all aspects of life. Embrace it. And just as athletes, artists, and writers sustain their energy and inspiration for hard work by interacting with others who share these passions, look to others in the scholarly community—your professors and fellow students—to keep yourself engaged in these ongoing intellectual challenges. While writing time is often solitary, it's meant to plug you into a vibrant academic community. What your instructors want, overall, is for you to join them in asking and pursuing important questions.

The original chapter, What Does the Professor Want? Understanding the Assignment by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about all of the things you have written this week—both in school and outside of it. Who was the audience for each? How did that impact your writing?
2. What does "analyze" mean? It's a common verb on assignment sheets—but what are you being asked to do when you analyze something?
3. "Critical thinking" is a crucial outcome in many classes—and arguably, one of the main goals of a college education. How does this skill transfer to other parts of your life? Where else is it important to think critically? What does it look like in those contexts?

ACTIVITIES

1. Freewrite on an assignment prompt. If you have one, do that one. If not, here's one to practice with: "Please write a five-page paper analyzing the controversy surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the food supply." What clarification questions would you like to ask your professor? What additional background knowledge do you need to deeply understand the topic? What are some starter ideas that could lead to a good thesis and intriguing argument?

2. Find a couple of sample student papers from online paper mills (Google "free college papers") and use the AAC&U rubric on critical thinking to evaluate them. Which descriptor in each row most closely fits the paper?

3. In small groups or as a whole class, work together to develop a rubric for an upcoming assignment. Create three to four categories for evaluation, develop criteria, and assign points for each. For example, if you have a category titled "Argument," what does that mean? What would excellent work look like in that category?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. The Online Writing Laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University is a wonderful set of resources for every aspect of college writing. Especially germane to this chapter is this summary of the most common types of writing assignments.

2. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has a helpful page with tips for understanding assignments.

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CHAPTER 3.

THERE IS MORE THAN ONE CORRECT WAY OF WRITING AND SPEAKING

ANJALI PATTANAYAK; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

People consistently lament that kids today can't speak properly or that people coming to this country need to learn to write correctly. These lamentations are based on the notion that there is a single correct way of speaking and writing. Currently, the general sentiment is that people should just learn to speak and write proper English. This understanding of writing is rooted in *current traditional rhetoric*, which focuses on a prescriptive and formulaic way of teaching writing that assumes there is only one way to write (or speak) something for it to be correct. However, over the past several decades, scholars in writing studies have examined the ways in which writing has a close dialectical relationship with identity, style, genre, and culture. In other words, the rules for writing shift with the people and communities involved as well as the purpose and type of writing.

Most people implicitly understand that the way they communicate changes with different groups of people, from bosses to work colleagues to peers to relatives. They understand that conversations that may be appropriate over a private dinner may not be appropriate at the workplace. These conversational shifts might be subtle, but they are distinct. While most people accept and understand these nuances exist and will adapt to these unspoken rules—and while we have all committed a social faux pas when we didn't understand these unspoken rules—we do not often afford this same benefit of the doubt to people who are new to our communities or who are learning our unspoken rules.

While the idea of arguing whether there is one correct way of communicating or whether writing is culturally situated might seem to be a pedantic exercise, the reality is that espousing the ideology that there is one correct way to speak and write disenfranchises many populations who are already denigrated by society. The writing most valued in this binary is a type of writing that is situated in middle-class white culture. In adhering to so-called correct language, we are devaluing the nonstandard dialects, cultures, and therefore identities of people and their communicative situations that do not fit a highly limited mold.

The way in which correctness in language devalues people is already troubling, but it becomes exacerbated by the current trends in education. Given this shift and the way that Standard

Written English is deeply rooted in white upper/middle-class culture, we see more and more students from diverse backgrounds gaining access to college who are facing barriers due to their linguistic backgrounds.

This means that while minority students and working-class students are ostensibly being given greater access to education, careers, and other facets of society they had been previously barred from, they are still facing serious barriers that their upper-class white counterparts do not, particularly in terms of culture, language, and literacy. J. Elspeth Stuckey argues that literacy, rather than enfranchising students, is a means of oppression and that it does little to help the economic futures of minority students because of how literacy teaches a particular set of values—ways of communicating and identity. In the context of educational settings, the cultures and identities of academia are valued more than those of the students, which sends the message that how they, their families, and members of their community speak and act are wrong by comparison. In essence, it sends the message starting at a very young age that who they are and where they come from is somehow lesser.

In this sense, education, while well intentioned, serves to further the marginalization of certain identities and cultures that do not fit. This is particularly evident in Latino, African American, and English as second language communities. In the book *Paying for the Party*, Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton note that colleges like the school they studied for five years, which they call Midwestern University, do not help facilitate social mobility. Frequently, the students who entered college best prepared were those who were already middle or upper class, meaning the opportunities the working- and lower-class students received were more limited (Armstrong and Hamilton 1–26). When you look at this alongside what Gloria Ladson-Billings calls the *educational debt*, or the compounded impact of educational deficits that grow across generations of poor minority students, literacy efforts as they are currently framed paint a bleak picture for poor minority students (3–12).

The issue is not just one of unequal access to opportunities. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Carmen Kynard illustrate how attitudes toward students as writers are interwoven with attitudes toward them as people. Language cannot be disassociated from people, which has important consequences for those who grow up speaking different dialects. By continuing to propagate the notion of correct and incorrect ways of speaking, we effectively devalue the intelligence and character of students, employees, and colleagues who, for whatever reasons, don't speak or write what in historical terms has been called the King's English (among other names). We use the perception of improper communication as evidence of others' lesser character or ability, despite recognizing that this country was united (if only in name) after declaring independence from that king (Kynard; Royster).

This perception becomes all the more problematic because it is about not just devaluing individuals but the widespread practice of devaluing the literate practices of those who are already marginalized. David Gold highlights how the literacy of African Americans, women, and working-class and rural people has been marginalized in our understanding of writing. Gold writes about how the literacy practices of African Americans in universities laid the groundwork for the civil rights movement. Indeed, the schools he studied were decades ahead of the larger national conversation on how literacy, identity, and power were interrelated. In her work examining how literacy and identity formation were key for African American women and for social change, Jacqueline Jones Royster discusses the importance of understanding these cultural, identity, and social movements, echoing the impact marginalized scholars had

in academia. Both demonstrate the detrimental impact of sidelining groups of people and their literate practices by devaluing their languages and their experiences, not just for those who are marginalized but for our larger understanding of how we as a society write.

The notion of one correct way of writing is also troubling because it operates under the assumption that linguistic differences are the result of error. The reality is that for many speakers, what we might perceive as a mistake is actually a system of difference. One notable example of a different dialect of English is Ebonics, which has different patterns of speech rooted in the ancestral heritage of its speakers. Similarly, immigrant groups will frequently speak and write English in a way that mirrors the linguistic heritage of their mother tongue.

The way that we conceptualize language is not just detrimental to minorities; it also devalues the identities that working- and lower-class people bring to communicative situations, including the classroom. Lynn Z. Bloom writes that "Freshman Composition is an unabashedly middle-class enterprise." She argues that one of the reasons composition is required for all students is because it promulgates middle-class values and ways of thinking. These values in the writing classroom are embodied in everything from the notion of property, which undergirds the way that plagiarism and intellectual property are treated, to the formality of language and rhetorical choices that are encouraged in papers (654–675).

Indeed, the way many instructors teach writing, plagiarism, citation, and word choice in papers is not in and of itself good but rather is the socially accepted way of interacting with text as defined by the middle class. Mike Rose and Irvin Peckham often write about the tension of middle-class values on working-class students and the cognitive dissonance and struggles with identity that come with imposing such values in writing under the guise of correctness. The idea that there is one correct way of writing devalues the writing, thoughts, intelligence, and identities of people from lower-class backgrounds.

Pragmatically, many argue that standard English should be dominant in the binary between academic English and all other dialects in order for speakers and writers to communicate with credibility in their communities. This argument has been used to justify the continued attention to correctness at the expense of authors' voices, but we can teach people to adapt while also valuing their identities. We can talk about writing as something that they can employ to their benefit rather than a hegemonic standard that supersedes their backgrounds, identities, and experiences.

In order to value the diversity of communication and identities that exist in the US, we need to start teaching and envisioning writing as a cultural and social activity. We need a more nuanced view of writing in society that encourages everyone to adapt to their audiences and contexts rather than placing an undue burden on those who do not fit the mold of standard English.

One strategy for teaching academic English without devaluing a writer's identity is code-switching, a concept already taught in schools with significant minority populations as a way of empowering young people. While instruction in code-switching is valuable because it teaches students that they can adopt different linguistic choices to appeal to different audiences, it is deeply problematic that the impetus is still placed on minority students with nonstandard dialects to adapt. While code-switching is meant to empower people, it is still rooted in the mentality that there is one correct way of writing, because even as code-switching teaches an incredibly nuanced way of thinking about writing, it is still being taught in the context

of preparing writers to deal with a society that will use errors in speaking as evidence that they are lesser. As a result, it is a less-than-ideal solution because it plays into—rather than undermines—the racism of academic English.

By perpetuating the myth of one correct way of writing, we are effectively marginalizing substantial swaths of the population linguistically and culturally. The first step in combating this is as easy as recognizing how correctness reinforces inequality and affects our own perceptions of people and questioning our assumptions about communication, and a second step is valuing code-switching in a wide swath of communicative situations.

The original chapter, *There Is One Correct Way of Writing and Speaking* by Anjali Pattanayak, is from Bad Ideas about Writing

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What new ideas were here for you to consider? In what ways did this chapter challenge your way of thinking?
2. Pattanayak suggests that one way to address students' different backgrounds and dialects is to incorporate more explicit discussion about code-switching in the classroom. Is this a satisfying solution? Why or why not? What are the benefits or problems with this approach?
3. Is it possible to be true to your own voice and also succeed in academia? What might that look like? Is that option more available to some students than others?

ACTIVITIES

1. Freewrite about the different "code-switching" spaces in your own life. How do you speak differently in different contexts? How does it feel to shift back and forth between those voices?

2. Research the term "code-switching" and learn more about who is under the most pressure to code-switch and why. How does this add to your understanding of Pattanayak's argument? What might be problematic about using the term to describe other kinds of language adjustment in the classroom?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. While the notion of what constitutes academic English has remained relatively static in popular culture, the reality of writing in the university has broadened to include many other types of writing. Patricia Bizzell, Helen Fox, and Christopher Shroeder compile arguments for addressing these other types of communication in *Alt Dis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*.

2. In *College Writing and Beyond*, Anne Beaufort provides a framework in which to understand how writing is dynamic. In her article "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise," Lynn Z. Bloom articulates the ways in which the cultural values of the middle class are being taught in the writing classroom as objectively good or true and the impact of this mentality. Additionally, Asao Inoue compiles a collection of articles in *Race and Writing Assessment* that provides frameworks for considering race in assessment practices.

3. In 1974, the Conference for College Composition and Communication passed the resolution *Students' Right to Their Own Language*. In the time since it passed, there has been a great deal of discussion around the wisdom of that resolution. Editors Austin Jackson, David E. Kirkland, and Staci Perryman-Clark compile short articles for and against this resolution.

4. Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur write about how the increasing number of English speakers in the world is increasing linguistic diversity in "Opinion: Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach." Additionally, Irvin Peckham writes extensively with a focus on working-class students in the classroom and the impact of college and academic writing as a middle-class enterprise in "The Stories We Tell." For more on the history and cultural development of African American Vernacular English, consider *Beyond Ebonics: Linguistic Pride and Racial Prejudice* by John Baugh.

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CHAPTER 4.

OVERCOMING WRITING ANXIETY AND WRITER'S BLOCK

CAROL BURNELL; JAIME WOOD; MONIQUE BABIN; SUSAN PESZNECKER; NICOLE ROSEVEAR; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

You may be thinking, "You could give me all the writing advice in the world, but sometimes I just get stuck! What I normally do just isn't working!" That's a familiar feeling for all writers. Sometimes the writing just seems to flow as if by magic, but then the flow stops cold. Your brain seems to have run out of things to say. If you just wait for the magic to come back, you might wait a long time. What professional writers know is that writing takes consistent effort. Writing comes out of a regular practice—a habit.

Professional writers also know that not everything they write ends up in the final draft. Sometimes we have to write what Anne Lamott calls a "shitty first draft." One of my favorite writing professors, Duncan Carter, used to say that he was a terrible writer but a great reviser, and that's what helped him write when inspiration wasn't available. So how do writers get going when they feel stuck or uninspired? They develop a set of habits and have more than one way to write to get the words flowing again.

You might associate the idea of writing anxiety or writer's block with procrastination, and procrastination certainly can be either a cause or an effect of writing anxiety. But writing anxiety or writer's block is more of a condition or state of being. We'll start by defining the term—so that you can figure out if you have it—and then cover some ways to work through it.

WHAT IS WRITING ANXIETY AND HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE IT?

Do you worry excessively about writing assignments? Do they make you feel uneasy or agitated? Do you have negative feelings about certain types of writing? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might be dealing with writing anxiety. Writing anxiety simply means that a writer is experiencing negative feelings about a given writing task.

Writing anxiety is often more about the audience and/or purpose for a given writing task than it is about the mere act of writing itself. Say you just bought a new pair of headphones. You brought them home, removed all the packaging, and connected them to your phone, and they're

amazing! So you decide to visit the company website, and you write a stellar review of the product, giving it a five-star rating and including descriptive details about the headphones' comfortable fit, excellent sound quality, ability to cancel outside noise, and reasonable price.

Now let's say that the next day in biology class, your instructor covers the topic of biomes, and you learn about animal habitats and biodiversity and the interrelation and interdependence of species within biomes. You find it fascinating and can't wait to learn more. But then something terrible happens. Your instructor assigns a term project on the subject. As your instructor begins to describe the length and other specifications for the report, complete with formatting guidelines, citation requirements, and a bibliography at the end, your palms start to sweat, your stomach feels uneasy, and you begin to have trouble focusing on anything else your instructor has to say. You're experiencing writing anxiety.

Writing anxiety is the condition of feeling uneasy about writing, and writer's block is what you experience when you can't manage to put words on the page. But these conditions aren't about the act of writing. Just yesterday, you wrote a great review for those cool new headphones. So why do you suddenly feel paralyzed by the thought of writing the biology essay? Let's consider some possible causes.

WHAT CAUSES WRITING ANXIETY?

The causes of writing anxiety are many. Here are just a few:

- Inexperience with the type of writing task
- Previous negative experiences with writing (e.g., someone, maybe a teacher, has given you negative feedback or said negative things about your writing)
- Negative feelings about writing (e.g., "I'm not a good writer," "I hate writing")
- Immediate deadline
- Distant deadline
- Lack of interest in the topic
- Personal problems or life events

Your level of experience may explain why you felt comfortable writing the headphone review yet broke out in a sweat at the thought of the biology paper. If you've never written anything similar to a specific assignment, maybe you're unsure about whether you can meet the assignment requirements or the teacher's expectations. Or maybe the last time you turned in a written report for school you received negative feedback or a bad grade from the teacher. Maybe you procrastinated most of the term, and now the paper is due next week, and you feel overwhelmed. Or maybe it's the second week of the term and the deadline seems so far away that you're not motivated to write.

Knowing the cause of your writing anxiety can help you move beyond it and get writing, even if you can't completely eliminate the problem. If the topic doesn't interest you or if you're having

problems at home, those probably aren't issues that will just disappear, but if you try some of the following strategies, I think you'll find that you can at least move forward with even the most anxiety inducing of writing assignments.

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING OR MANAGING WRITING ANXIETY

There are a number of strategies that you can draw on to help you move past the feeling of being lost or stuck. Consider the following strategies to help you start writing again.

Just Start Writing

It might sound like it's oversimplifying the matter, but it's true. Half the battle is to just start writing. Try some strategies like freewriting or note-taking to get your writing muscles moving. Give yourself permission to write badly at this stage! Bruce Ballenger, a writer and professor of English at Boise State, explains why writing badly is an important part of the writing process: "Giving myself permission to write badly makes it much more likely that I will write what I don't expect to write, and from those surprises will come some of my best writing. Writing badly is also a convenient alternative to staring off into space and waiting for inspiration."

Sometimes the biggest problem writers have with getting started is that they feel like the writing needs to be good or well organized, or they feel like they need to start at the beginning. None of that is true. All you need to do is start.

Have you ever seen a potter make a clay pot? Before a potter can start shaping or throwing a pot, they have to bring the big wet blob of clay and slap it down on the table. It's heavy and wet and messy, but it's the essential raw material. No clay? No pot.

"Bad writing" is a lot like that. You have to dump all the words and ideas onto the table. Just get them out. Only then do you have the raw material you need to start shaping the words into something beautiful and lasting. You can wait until the revision stages to worry about shaping your writing to be its best. For now, just get the ideas on the table.

Create Smaller Tasks And Short-Term Goals

One of the biggest barriers to writing can be that the task just seems too large, and perhaps the due date is weeks away. Each of these conditions can contribute to feelings of being overwhelmed or to the tendency to procrastinate. But the remedy is simple and will help you keep writing something each week toward your deadline and toward the finished product: divide larger writing tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks, and set intermediate deadlines.

The process that the authors used for writing this text provides a good example. As authors, we had to divide the text into sections, but we also had to plan the process for a first draft, peer reviews, and revisions, along with adding images, links, and other resources, not to mention the final publication of the text online. Had we not divided up the larger tasks into smaller ones and set short-term goals and deadlines, the process of writing the text would have been overwhelming. We didn't meet every single intermediate deadline right on time, but they helped move us along and helped us meet the most important deadline—the final one—with a complete text that was ready to publish on schedule.

Imagine that you have a term paper that's assigned during Week 1 of an eleven-week term, and it's due during finals week. Make a list of all the tasks you can think of that need to be

completed, from beginning to end, to accomplish all that the assignment requires. List the tasks, and assign yourself due dates for each task. Consider taking it a step further, and create a task table that allows you to include a column for additional notes. Here's an example:

Table 4.1 An example of a writing schedule. A modifiable and accessible download can be accessed here.

Task	Complete by	Notes
Brainstorm topics and select a topic.	Wed., Week 2	**Notes:**
Do some preliminary research on the web to learn about the topic.	Wed., Week 3	**Notes:**
Develop list of search terms for some more focused research.	Fri., Week 3	**Notes:** Ask instructor to look over my search terms.
Spend some time at the library searching library holdings, databases, more focused research on the web.	Mon., Week 4	**Notes:** Plan ahead to make sure I have time and transportation.
Read sources and take notes.	Mon., Week 5	**Notes:** Consult note-taking examples in my textbook.
Create an outline for the term paper.	Fri., Week 5	**Notes:**
Begin drafting.	Mon., Week 6	**Notes:** Remember to try some freewriting.
Complete first rough draft.	Wed., Week 7	**Notes:**
Ask a couple of classmates to read draft and comment; meet with instructor and ask questions.	Fri., Week 7	**Notes:** Ask classmates week before if they want to meet and exchange papers.
Do some additional research if needed.	Mon., Week 8	**Notes:**
Revise first draft and complete second draft with conclusion.	Mon., Week 9	**Notes:** Try revision strategies we learned about in class.
Meet with tutor in the Writing Center to go over my essay.	Fri., Week 9	**Notes:** Call the writing center the week before for appt.
Check for perfection: citations, formatting, and works cited are in place and correct; final revisions completed.	Fri., Week 10	**Notes:** Have someone new give it a final read-through.
Print, staple, and turn in (or save and upload) essay.	Mon., Finals Week	**Notes:** Celebrate!

Collaborate

Talk to your friends or family or to a tutor in your college writing center about your ideas for your essay. Sometimes talking about your ideas is the best way to flesh them out and get more ideas flowing. Write down notes during or just after your conversation.

Classmates are a great resource because they're studying the same subjects as you and working on the same assignments. Talk to them often, and form study groups. Ask people to look at your ideas or writing and to give you feedback. Set goals and hold each other accountable for meeting deadlines (a little friendly competition can be motivating!).

Talk to other potential readers. Ask them what they would expect from this type of writing. Meet with a tutor in your campus writing center. Be sure to come to the appointment prepared with a printed copy of the assignment and a short list of what you want to work on, along with a printed copy of your essay.

Embrace Reality

Don't imagine the situation of your writing assignment to be any better or worse than it really is. There are some important truths for you to recognize:

- Focus on what you do best rather than fretting about your perceived weaknesses.
- Acknowledge that writing can be difficult and that all you need to do is do your best.
- Recognize what might be new or unfamiliar about the type of writing that you're doing.
- Remember that you're a student and that you're supposed to be experiencing things that are new and unfamiliar (new formats, new audiences, new subject matter, new processes, new approaches, etc.).
- Repeat the mantra "It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to be *done*."

Seek Out Experts

If you can, find more experienced writers (especially related to the type of writing that you're doing) and ask them questions. Sometimes, this might just mean a friend or family member who's already taken a couple of years of college courses. Maybe it's a fellow student who has already taken the class you're in now. Also, the tutors in your college writing center can be a big help at any stage in the writing process. Give them a call and make an appointment. And don't forget the expert you see all the time throughout any class that you take: your instructor. Ask your instructor for suggestions. That's what they're there for.

Another way to learn from the experience of others is to look at examples of other pieces of writing of the type that you're working on. How is this piece organized? Does it make use of source material? What sort of tone does it use? If you don't know where to find examples, ask your instructor. If they don't have them at the ready, they'll likely be able to give you some suggestions about where to find some.

The original chapter, Overcoming Writing Anxiety and Writer's Block by Carol Burnell, Jaime Wood, Monique Babin, Susan Pesznecker, and Nicole Rosevear, is from The Word on College Reading and Writing

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever felt anxious about writing? How did you get through it?
2. How might the audience or context for writing impact how it feels to write it?
3. What are some low-stakes kinds of writing that you could do to build up to a high-stakes assignment?
4. What is the value of "bad writing" or "shitty first drafts"? What is the risk of trying to write a perfect first draft?

ACTIVITIES

1. Freewrite about your paper topic for ten minutes. Set a timer and don't stop writing. Don't worry about spelling or clarity—you won't be turning it in. After the timer rings, sit back and see how much you have written. How did it feel? How did this approach impact your feelings around writing? Was it easier or harder than starting a paper? How might you use this approach in the future?
2. Create a detailed timeline for your next essay assignment. Break it down into smaller tasks and assign a deadline for each. Notice: is this helpful for you? In what way?
3. Write three hundred words every day for a week. This can be on any topic! Then reflect on the experience. How did you feel about writing at the beginning of the week and at the end? What changed in your speed or fluency of writing? What did you learn about yourself as a writer or your process?

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PART II.

ANALYZING PERSUASION

CHAPTER 5.

BACKPACKS VS. BRIEFCASES

Steps toward Rhetorical Analysis

LAURA BOLIN CARROLL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Imagine the first day of class in first-year composition at your university. The moment your instructor walked into the room, you likely began analyzing them and making assumptions about what kind of teacher they will be. You might have noticed what kind of bag they are carrying—a tattered leather satchel? A hot-pink polka-dotted backpack? A burgundy briefcase? You probably also noticed what they are wearing—trendy slacks and an untucked striped shirt? A suit? Jeans and a T-shirt?

It is likely that the above observations were only a few you made. You might have also noticed your instructor's shoes, their jewelry or tattoos, whether they wear a wedding ring, how their hair is styled, whether they stand tall or slump, how quickly they walk, or maybe even if their nails are done. If you don't tend to notice any of these things about your instructors, you certainly do about the people around you—your roommate, others in your residence hall, students you are assigned to work with in groups, or a prospective date. For most of us, many of the people we encounter on a given day are subject to this kind of quick analysis.

Now as you performed this kind of analysis, you likely didn't walk through each of these questions one by one, write out the answer, and add up the responses to see what kind of person you are interacting with. Instead, you quickly took in the information and made an informed—and likely somewhat accurate—decision about that person. Over the years, as you have interacted with others, you have built a mental database that you can draw on to make conclusions about what a person's looks tell you about their personality. You have become able to analyze quickly what people are saying about themselves through the way they choose to dress, accessorize, or wear their hair.

We have, of course, heard that you "can't judge a book by its cover," but, in fact, we do it all the time. Daily, we find ourselves in situations where we are forced to make snap judgments. Each day, we meet different people, encounter unfamiliar situations, and see different kinds of media that ask us to do, think, buy, and act in all sorts of ways. In fact, our saturation in media and the images it presents is one of the reasons why learning to do rhetorical analysis is so important.

The more we know about how to analyze situations and draw informed conclusions, the better we can become about making savvy judgments about the people, situations, and media we encounter.

IMPLICATIONS OF RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Media is one of the most important places where this kind of analysis needs to happen. Rhetoric—the way we use language and images to persuade—is what makes media work. Think of all the media you see and hear every day: Twitter, television shows, web pages, billboards, text messages, podcasts. Even as you read this chapter, more ways to get those messages to you quickly and in a persuasive manner are being developed. Media is constantly asking you to buy something, act in some way, believe something to be true, or interact with others in a specific manner. Understanding rhetorical messages is essential to help us become informed consumers, but it also helps us evaluate the ethics of messages, how they affect us personally, and how they affect society.

Take, for example, a commercial for men's deodorant that tells you that you'll be irresistible to women if you use this product. This campaign doesn't just ask you to buy the product though. It also asks you to trust the company's credibility, or ethos, and to believe the messages they send about how men and women interact, about sexuality, and about what constitutes a healthy body. You have to decide whether you will choose to buy the product and how you will choose to respond to the messages that the commercial sends.

Or, in another situation, a Facebook group asks you to support health care reform. The rhetoric in this group uses people's stories of their struggles to obtain affordable health care. These stories, which are often heart wrenching, use emotion to persuade you—also called pathos. You are asked to believe that health care reform is necessary and urgent, and you are asked to act on these beliefs by calling your congresspersons and asking them to support the reforms as well.

Because media rhetoric surrounds us, it is important to understand how rhetoric works. If we refuse to stop and think about how and why it persuades us, we can become mindless consumers who buy into arguments about what makes us value ourselves and what makes us happy. For example, research has shown that only 2% of women consider themselves beautiful ("Campaign"), which has been linked to the way that the fashion industry defines beauty. We are also told by the media that buying more stuff can make us happy, but historical surveys show that US happiness peaked in the 1950s, when people saw as many advertisements in their lifetime as the average American sees in one year (Leonard).

Our worlds are full of these kinds of social influences. As we interact with other people and with media, we are continually creating and interpreting rhetoric. In the same way that you decide how to process, analyze, or ignore these messages, you create them. You probably think about what your clothing will communicate as you go to a job interview or get ready for a date. You are also using rhetoric when you try to persuade your parents to send you money or your friends to see the movie that interests you. When you post to your blog or tweet something, you are using rhetoric.

In fact, according to rhetorician Kenneth Burke, rhetoric is everywhere: "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.' Food eaten and digested is not rhetoric. But in the meaning of food, there is much rhetoric, the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical

device of statesmen" (71–72). In other words, most of our actions are persuasive in nature. What we choose to wear (tennis shoes vs. flip-flops), where we shop (Whole Foods Market vs. Wal-Mart), what we eat (organic vs. fast food), or even the way we send information (snail mail vs. text message) can work to persuade others.

Chances are you have grown up learning to interpret and analyze these types of rhetoric. They become so commonplace that we don't realize how often and how quickly we are able to perform this kind of rhetorical analysis. When your teacher walked in on the first day of class, you probably didn't think to yourself, "I think I'll do some rhetorical analysis on her clothing and draw some conclusions about what kind of personality she might have and whether I think I'll like her." And yet you probably were able to come up with some conclusions based on the evidence you had.

However, when this same teacher hands you an advertisement, photograph, or article and asks you to write a rhetorical analysis of it, you might have been baffled or felt a little overwhelmed. The good news is that many of the analytical processes that you already use to interpret the rhetoric around you are the same ones that you'll use for these assignments.

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION; OR, DISCERNING CONTEXT

One of the first places to start is context. Rhetorical messages always occur in a specific situation or context. The president's speech might respond to a specific global event, like an economic summit; that's part of the context. You choose your clothing depending on where you are going or what you are doing; that's context. A television commercial comes on during specific programs and at specific points of the day; that's context. A billboard is placed in a specific part of the community; that's context too.

In an article called "The Rhetorical Situation," Lloyd Bitzer argues that there are three parts to understanding the context of a rhetorical moment: exigence, audience, and constraints. Exigence is the circumstance or condition that invites a response; "imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (304). In other words, rhetorical discourse is usually responding to some kind of problem. You can begin to understand a piece's exigence by asking, "What is this rhetoric responding to? What might have happened to make the rhetor (the person who creates the rhetoric) respond in this way?"

The exigence can be extremely complex, like the need for a new Supreme Court justice, or it can be much simpler, like receiving an email that asks you where you and your friends should go for your road trip this weekend. Understanding the exigence is important because it helps you begin to discover the purpose of the rhetoric. It helps you understand what the discourse is trying to accomplish.

Another part of the rhetorical context is the audience, those who are the (intended or unintended) recipients of the rhetorical message. The audience should be able to respond to the exigence. In other words, the audience should be able to help address the problem. You might be very frustrated with your campus's requirement that all first-year students purchase a meal plan for on-campus dining. You might even send an email to a good friend back home voicing that frustration. However, if you want to address the exigence of the meal plans, the most appropriate audience would be the person/office on campus that oversees meal plans. Your friend back home cannot solve the problem (though she may be able to offer sympathy

or give you some good suggestions); the person who can change the meal plan requirements is probably on campus. Rhetors make all sorts of choices based on their audience. Audience can determine the type of language used, the formality of the discourse, the medium or delivery of the rhetoric, and even the types of reasons used to make the rhetor's argument. Understanding the audience helps you begin to see and understand the rhetorical moves that the rhetor makes.

The last piece of the rhetorical situation is the constraints. The constraints of the rhetorical situation are those things that have the power to "constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 306). Constraints have a lot to do with how the rhetoric is presented. Constraints can be "beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives" (306). Constraints limit the way the discourse is delivered or communicated. Constraints may be something as simple as your instructor limiting your proposal to one thousand words or something far more complex like the kinds of language you need to use to persuade a certain community.

So how do you apply this to a piece of rhetoric? Let's say you are flipping through a magazine, and you come across an advertisement that has a large headline that reads, "Why Some People Say 'D'OH' When You Say 'Homer.'" This ad is an Ad Council public service announcement (PSA) to promote arts education and is sponsored by Americans for the Arts and the National Association of Music Merchants, the trade association of the international music products industry.

Since you want to understand more about what this ad means and what it wants you to believe or do, you begin to think about the rhetorical situation. You first might ask, "What is the ad responding to? What problem does it hope to address?" That's the exigence. In this case, the exigence is the cutting of arts funding and children's lack of exposure to the arts. According to the Ad Council's website, "The average kid is provided insufficient time to learn and experience the arts. This PSA campaign was created to increase involvement in championing arts education both in and out of school." The PSA is responding directly to the fact that kids are not getting enough arts education.

Then you might begin to think about to whom the Ad Council targeted the ad. Unless you're a parent, you are probably not the primary audience. If you continued reading the text of the ad, you'd notice that there is information to persuade parents that the arts are helpful to their children and to let them know how to help their children become more involved with the arts. The ad tells parents that "the experience will for sure do more than entertain them. It'll build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And that's reason enough to make a parent say, 'D'oh!,' For Ten Simple Ways to instill art in your kids' lives visit AmericansForTheArts.org" ("Why"). Throughout the text of the ad, parents are told both what to believe about arts education and how to act in response to the belief.

There also might be a secondary audience for this ad—people who are not the main audience of the ad but might also be able to respond to the exigence. For example, philanthropists who could raise money for arts education or legislators who might pass laws for arts funding or to require arts education in public schools could also be intended audiences for this ad.

Finally, you might want to think about the constraints or the limitations on the ad. Sometimes these are harder to get at, but we can guess a few things. One constraint might be the cost of the ad. Different magazines charge differently for ad space as well as placement within the

magazine, so the Ad Council could have been constrained by how much money they wanted to spend to circulate the ad. The ad is also only one page long, so there might have been a limitation on the amount of space for the ad. Finally, on the Ad Council's web page, they list the requirements for organizations seeking the funding and support of the Ad Council. There are twelve criteria, but here are a few:

1. The sponsor organization must be a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, private foundation, government agency or coalition of such groups.
2. The issue must address the Ad Council's focus on Health & Safety, Education, or Community. Applications which benefit children are viewed with favor—as part of the Ad Council's Commitment to Children.
3. The issue must offer a solution through an individual action.
4. The effort must be national in scope, so that the message has relevance to media audiences in communities throughout the nation. ("Become")

Each of these criteria helps us understand the limitations on both who can participate as rhetor and what can be said.

The exigence, audience, and constraints are only one way to understand the context of a piece of rhetoric, and, of course, there are other ways to get at context. Some rhetoricians look at subject, purpose, audience, and occasion. Others might look at the "rhetorical triangle" of writer, reader, and purpose.

An analysis using the rhetorical triangle would ask similar questions about audience as one using the rhetorical situation, but it would also ask questions about the writer and the purpose of the document. Asking questions about the writer helps the reader determine whether she or he is credible and knowledgeable. For example, the Ad Council has been creating public service announcements since 1942 ("Loose lips sink ships," anyone?) and is a nonprofit agency. They also document their credibility by showing the impact of their campaigns in several ways: "Destruction of our forests by wildfires has been reduced from 22 million acres to less than 8.4 million acres per year, since our Forest Fire Prevention campaign began" and "6,000 children were paired with a mentor in just the first 18 months of our mentoring campaign" ("About").

Based on this information, we can assume that the Ad Council is a credible rhetor, and whether or not we agree with the rhetoric they produce, we can probably assume it contains reliable information. Asking questions about the next part of the rhetorical triangle, the purpose of a piece of rhetoric, helps you understand what the rhetor is trying to achieve through the discourse. We can discern the purpose by asking questions like "What does the rhetor want me to believe after seeing this message?" or "What does the rhetor want me to do?" In some ways, the purpose takes the exigence to the next step. If the exigence frames the problem, the purpose frames the response to that problem.

The rhetorical situation and rhetorical triangle are two ways to begin to understand how the rhetoric functions within the context you find it. The key idea is to understand that no rhetorical performance takes place in a vacuum. One of the first steps to understanding a piece of rhetoric is to look at the context in which it takes place. Whatever terminology you (or your instructor) choose, it is a good idea to start by locating your analysis within a rhetorical situation.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER—THE ARGUMENT

The rhetorical situation is just the beginning of your analysis though. What you really want to understand is the argument—what the rhetor wants you to believe or do and how he or she goes about that persuasion. Effective argumentation has been talked about for centuries. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle was teaching the men of Athens how to persuade different kinds of audiences in different kinds of rhetorical situations. Aristotle articulated three "artistic appeals" that a rhetor could draw on to make a case—logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos

Logos is commonly defined as argument from reason, and it usually appeals to an audience's intellectual side. As audiences we want to know the "facts of the matter," and logos helps present these—statistics, data, and logical statements. For example, in our Homer ad for the arts, the text tells parents that the arts will "build their capacity to learn more. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science" ("Why"). You might notice that there aren't numbers or charts here, but giving this information appeals to the audience's intellectual side.

The audience can see a continuation of the argument on the Ad Council's web page, and again much of the argument appeals to logos and draws on extensive research that shows that the arts do these things:

- Allow kids to express themselves creatively and bolster their self-confidence
- Teach kids to be more tolerant and open
- Improve kids' overall academic performance
- Show that kids actively engaged in arts education are likely to have higher SAT scores than those with little to no arts involvement
- Develop skills needed by the twenty-first-century workforce: critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective communication, teamwork, and more
- Keep students engaged in school and less likely to drop out ("Arts")

Each bullet above is meant to intellectually persuade parents that they need to be more intentional in providing arts education for their children.

Few of us are persuaded only with our minds though. Even if we intellectually agree with something, it is difficult to get us to act unless we are also persuaded in our hearts. This kind of appeal to emotion is called pathos. Pathetic appeals (as rhetoric that draws on pathos is called) used alone without logos and ethos can come across as emotionally manipulative or overly sentimental but are very powerful when used in conjunction with the other two appeals.

Pathos

Emotional appeals can come in many forms—an anecdote or narrative, an image such as a photograph, or even humor. For example, on their web campaign, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) uses an image of a baby chick and of Ronald McDonald wielding

a knife to draw attention to their Chicken McCruelty UnHappy Meal campaign. These images are meant to evoke an emotional response in the viewer and, along with a logos appeal with the statistics about how cruelly chickens are treated, persuade the viewer to boycott McDonald's.

Pathos can also be a very effective appeal if the rhetor has to persuade the audience in a very short amount of time, which is why it is used heavily in print advertisements, billboards, or television commercials. An investment company will fill a thirty-second commercial with images of families and couples enjoying each other, seeming happy, and surrounded by wealth to persuade you to do business with them.

The thirty-second time spot does not allow them to give the fifteen-year growth of each of their funds, and pathetic appeals will often hold our interest much longer than intellectual appeals.

The ad promoting the importance of art uses humor to appeal to the audience's emotional side. By comparing the epic poet Homer to Homer Simpson and his classic catchphrase "D'oh!" the ad uses humor to draw people into their argument about the arts. The humor continues as they ask parents if their kids know the difference between the Homers: "The only Homer some kids know is the one who can't write his own last name" ("Why"). The ad also appeals to emotion through its language use (diction), describing Homer as "one very ancient dude," and describing the Odyssey as "the sequel" to the Iliad. In this case, the humor of the ad, which occurs in the first few lines, is meant to draw the reader in and help them become interested in the argument before the ad gets to the logos, which is in the last few lines of the ad.

Ethos

The humor also makes the organization seem real and approachable, contributing to the ethos. The humor might lead you to think that Americans for the Arts is not a stuffy bunch of suits but an organization you can relate to or one that has a realistic understanding of the world. Ethos refers to the credibility of the rhetor—which can be a person or an organization. A rhetor can develop credibility in many ways. The tone of the writing and whether that tone is appropriate for the context helps build a writer's ethos, as does the accuracy of the information or the visual presentation of the rhetoric.

In the Homer ad, the ethos is built in several ways. The simple, humorous, and engaging language (e.g., "Greek Gods. Achilles Heel. Trojan Horse. All of these icons are brought to us by one very ancient dude—Homer. In *The Iliad* and its sequel, *The Odyssey*, he presented Greek mythology in everyday language" ["Why"]) draws the audience in and helps the tone of the ad seem very approachable. Also, the knowledge of Greek mythology and the information about how the arts help children—which also contribute to the logos appeal—make the ad seem credible and authoritative. However, the fact that the ad does not use too many statistics or overly technical language also contributes to the ethos of the ad because often sounding too intellectual can come across as pompous or stuffy.

Aristotle's artistic appeals are not the only way to understand the argument of rhetoric. You might choose to look at the claim or the unstated assumptions of a piece; someone else might consider the visual appeal of the rhetoric, like the font, page layout, types of paper, or images; another person might focus on the language use and the specific word choice and sentence structure of a piece. Logos, pathos, and ethos can provide a nice framework for analysis, but there are numerous ways to understand how a piece of rhetoric persuades (or fails to persuade).

Looking at the context and components of a piece of rhetoric often isn't enough though because it is important to draw conclusions about the rhetoric: Does it successfully respond to the exigence? Is it an ethical approach? Is it persuasive? These kinds of questions let you begin to create your own claims, your own rhetoric, as you take a stand on what other people say, do, or write.

BEGINNING TO ANALYZE

Once you have established the context for the rhetoric you are analyzing, you can begin to think about how well it fits into that context. You've probably been in a situation where you arrived way underdressed for an occasion. You thought that the dinner was just a casual get-together with friends; it turned out to be a far more formal affair, and you felt very out of place. There are also times when discourse fails to respond to the situation well—it doesn't fit. On the other hand, successful discourses often respond very well to the context. They address the problem, consider the audience's needs, provide accurate information, and have a compelling claim. One of the reasons you work to determine the rhetorical situation for a piece of discourse is to consider whether it works within that context. You can begin this process by asking questions like the following:

- Does the rhetoric address the problem it claims to address?
- Is the rhetoric targeted at an audience who has the power to make change?
- Are the appeals appropriate to the audience?
- Does the rhetor give enough information to make an informed decision?
- Does the rhetoric attempt to manipulate in any way (by giving incomplete/inaccurate information or abusing the audience's emotions)?
- What other subclaims do you have to accept to understand the rhetor's main claim? (For example, in order to accept the Ad Council's claim that the arts boost math and science scores, you first have to value the boosting of those scores.)
- What possible negative effects might come from this rhetoric?

Rhetorical analysis asks how discourse functions in the setting in which it is found. In the same way that a commercial for denture cream seems very out of place when aired during a reality television show aimed at teenagers, rhetoric that does not respond well to its context often fails to persuade. In order to perform analysis, you must understand the context and then carefully study the ways that the discourse does and does not respond appropriately to that context.

The bottom line is that the same basic principles apply when you look at any piece of rhetoric (your instructor's clothing, an advertisement, the president's speech): you need to consider the context and the argument. As you begin to analyze rhetoric, there are lots of different types of rhetoric you might encounter in a college classroom, such as the following:

- Political cartoon
- Wikipedia entry

- Scholarly article
- Bar graph
- Op-ed piece in the newspaper
- Speech
- YouTube video
- Book chapter
- Photograph
- PowerPoint presentation

All of the above types of discourse try to persuade you. They may ask you to accept a certain kind of knowledge as valid, they may ask you to believe a certain way, or they may ask you to act. It is important to understand what a piece of rhetoric is asking of you, how it tries to persuade you, and whether that persuasion fits within the context you encounter it. Rhetorical analysis helps you answer those questions.

IMPLICATIONS OF RHETORICAL ANALYSIS; OR, WHY DO THIS STUFF ANYWAY?

So you might be wondering, if you know how to do this analysis already—you can tell what kind of person someone is by their clothing or what a commercial wants you to buy without carefully listening to it—why do you need to know how to do more formal analysis? How does this matter outside a college classroom?

Well, first of all, much of the reading and learning in college requires some level of rhetorical analysis: as you read a textbook chapter to prepare for a quiz, it is helpful to be able to distill the main points quickly; when you read a journal article for a research paper, it is necessary to understand the scholar's thesis; when you watch a video in class, it is useful to be able to understand how the creator is trying to persuade you. But college is not the only place where an understanding of how rhetoric works is important. You will find yourself in many situations—from boardrooms to your children's classrooms or churches to city council meetings where you need to understand the heart of the arguments being presented.

One final example: in November 2000, Campbell's Soup Company launched a campaign to show that many of their soups were low in calories and showed prepubescent girls refusing to eat because they were "watching their weight." A very small organization called Dads and Daughters, a group that fights advertising that targets girls with negative body images, contacted Campbell's explaining the problems they saw in an ad that encouraged young girls to be self-conscious about their weight and asked Campbell's to pull the ad. A few days later, Campbell's vice president for marketing and corporate communications called. One of the dads said that "the Vice President acknowledged he had received their letter, reviewed the ad again, saw their point, and was pulling the ad," responding to a "couple of guys writing a letter" ("Media"). Individuals who understand rhetorical analysis and act to make change can have a tremendous influence on their world.

The original chapter, Backpacks v. Briefcases: Steps Toward Rhetorical Analysis by Laura Bolin Carroll, is from Writing Spaces vol 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are examples of rhetoric that you see or hear on a daily basis?
2. What are some ways that you create rhetoric? What kinds of messages are you trying to communicate?
3. Think about all of the media that you have consumed in the last twenty-four hours, and choose one to analyze. Who was the intended audience? What were the explicit or implied arguments? What rhetorical strategies were used?
4. Which Aristotelian appeal do you find most persuasive or important: logos, ethos, or pathos? How would your answer change for different types of media: a political speech, a commercial, an article about climate change, a sitcom?

ACTIVITIES

1. Freewrite about your own personal style choices today. Imagine that you are an outside observer: What do you notice? How would you interpret what you are wearing?
2. Write a message to your parent asking to borrow $20. Now write a message to your friend asking for the same favor. How did the audience change your style, tone, evidence, reasons, or constraints?
3. Find an advertisement (either a print ad or a commercial) and analyze it using the rhetorical analysis questions laid out in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 6.

THE RHETORICAL APPEALS AND SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Regardless of the style of argument you use, you will need to consider the ways you engage your audience. Aristotle identified three kinds of *rhetorical appeals*: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*.

The best argumentation engages all three of these appeals, falling in the center where all three overlap. Unbalanced application of rhetorical appeals is likely to leave your audience suspicious, doubtful, or even bored.

LOGOS

Logos refers to an appeal to an audience's logical reasoning. Logos will often employ statistics, data, or other quantitative facts to demonstrate the validity of an argument. For example, an argument about the wage gap might indicate that women, on average, earn only 80% of the salary that men in comparable positions earn; this would imply a logical conclusion that our economy favors men.

However, stating a fact or statistic does not alone constitute logos. For instance, when I show you a graph, I am not yet making a logical appeal. Yes, a graph might be "fact-based," drawing on data to illustrate a phenomenon. That characteristic alone, though, doesn't make a logical appeal. For my appeal to be logical, I also need to *interpret* the graph. Your logic is only complete when you've drawn a logical conclusion from your facts, statistics, or other information.

There are many other ways we draw logical conclusions. There are entire branches of academia dedicated to understanding the many kinds of logical reasoning, but we might get a better idea by looking at a specific kind of logic. Let's take as an example the logical syllogism, which might look something like this:

Figure 6.1

Pretty straightforward, right? We can see how a general rule (major premise) is applied to a specific situation (minor premise) to develop a logical conclusion. I like to introduce this kind of logic because students sometimes jump straight from the major premise to the conclusion; if you skip the middle step, your logic will be less convincing.

LOGICAL FALLACIES

When logic is faulty or misused to manipulate, that's a logical fallacy. Logical fallacies are part of our daily lives; we have all encountered fallacies like stereotypes, generalizations, and misguided assumptions. You may have heard some terms about fallacies already (red herring, slippery slope, non sequitur).

Fallacies follow patterns of reasoning that would otherwise be perfectly acceptable to us, but within their basic structure, they make a mistake. Aristotle identified that fallacies happen on the "material" level (the content is fallacious—something about the ideas or premises is flawed) and the "verbal" level (the writing or speech is fallacious—something about the delivery or medium is flawed).

It's important to be able to recognize these so that you can critically interrogate others' arguments and improve your own. Here are some of the most common logical fallacies:

Table 6.1 A list of the most common logical fallacies with examples

Fallacy	Description	Example
Post hoc, ergo propter hoc	"After this, therefore because of this"—a confusion of cause and effect with coincidence, attributing a consequence to an unrelated event. This error assumes that correlation equals causation, which is sometimes not the case.	Statistics show that rates of ice cream consumption and deaths by drowning both increased in June. This must mean that ice cream causes drowning.
Non sequitur	"Does not follow"—a random digression that distracts from the train of logic (like a "red herring") or draws an unrelated logical conclusion. John Oliver calls one manifestation of this fallacy "whataboutism," which he describes as a way to deflect attention from the subject at hand.	*Sherlock is great at solving crimes; therefore, he'll also make a great father.* "Sherlock Holmes smokes a pipe, which is unhealthy. But what about Bill Clinton? He eats McDonald's every day, which is also unhealthy."
Straw man	An oversimplification or cherry-picking of the opposition's argument to make them easier to attack.	"People who oppose the destruction of Confederate monuments are all white supremacists."
Ad hominem	"To the person"—a personal attack on the arguer rather than a critique of their ideas.	"I don't trust Moriarty's opinion on urban planning because he wears bowties." Truly, though, bowties are the most suspicious; just look at Eleven. The most sus Doctor.
Slippery slope	An unreasonable prediction that one event will lead to a related but unlikely series of events that follows.	"If we let people of the same sex get married, then people will start marrying their dogs too!"
False dichotomy	A simplification of a complex issue into only two sides.	"Given the choice between pizza and Chinese food for dinner, we simply must choose Chinese."

PATHOS

The second rhetorical appeal we'll consider here is perhaps the most common: pathos refers to the process of engaging the reader's emotions. (You might recognize the Greek root pathos

in "sympathy," "empathy," and "pathetic.") A writer can evoke a great variety of emotions to support their argument, from fear, passion, and joy to pity, kinship, and rage. By playing on the audience's feelings, writers can increase the impact of their arguments.

There are two especially effective techniques for cultivating pathos:

1. ***Make the audience aware of the issue's relevance to them specifically***—"How would you feel if this happened to you? What are we to do about this issue?"

2. ***Tell stories.*** A story about one person or one community can have a deeper impact than broad, impersonal data or abstract, hypothetical statements.

Consider the difference between "About 1.5 million pets are euthanized each year" and "Scooter, an energetic and loving former service dog with curly brown hair like a Brillo pad, was put down yesterday." Both are impactful, but the latter is more memorable and more specific.

Pathos is ubiquitous in our current journalistic practices because people are more likely to act (or at least consume media) when they feel emotionally moved. Consider, as an example, the outpouring of support for detained immigrants in June 2018, reacting to the Trump administration's controversial family separation policy. As stories and images surfaced, millions of dollars were raised in a matter of days on the premise of pathos, resulting in the temporary suspension of that policy.

ETHOS

Your argument wouldn't be complete without an appeal to ethos. Cultivating ethos refers to the means by which you demonstrate your authority or expertise on a topic. You'll have to show your audience that you're trustworthy if they are going to buy your argument.

There are a handful of ways to demonstrate ethos:

By personal experience

Although your lived experience might not set hard-and-fast rules about the world, it is worth noting that you may be an expert on certain facets of your life. For instance, a student who has played rugby for fifteen years of their life is in many ways an authority on the sport.

By education or other certifications

Professional achievements demonstrate ethos by revealing status in a certain field or discipline.

By citing other experts

The common expression is "Stand on the shoulders of giants." You can develop ethos by pointing to other people with authority and saying, "Look, this smart/experienced/qualified/important person agrees with me."

A common misconception is that ethos corresponds with "ethics." However, you can remember that ethos is about credibility because it shares a root with "authority."

KAIROS AND THE SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ARGUMENTATION

"Good" argumentation depends largely on your place in time, space, and culture. Different cultures throughout the world value the elements of argumentation differently, and argument has different purposes in different contexts. The content of your argument and your strategies for delivering it will change in every unique rhetorical situation.

Continuing from logos, pathos, and ethos, the notion of *kairos* speaks to this concern. To put it in plain language, kairos is the force that determines what will be the best argumentative approach in the moment in which you're arguing; it is closely aligned with rhetorical occasion. According to rhetoricians, the characteristics of the kairos determine the balance and application of logos, pathos, and ethos.

Moreover, your sociohistorical context will bear on what you can assume of your audience. What can you take for granted that your audience knows and believes? The "common sense" that your audience relies on is always changing: common sense in the US in 1950 was much different from common sense in the US in 1920 or common sense in the US in 2022. You can make assumptions about your audience's interests, values, and background knowledge, but only with careful consideration of the time and place in which you are arguing.

As an example, let's consider the principle of logical noncontradiction. Put simply, this means that for an argument to be valid, its logical premises must not contradict each other: if A = B, then B = A. If I said that a dog is a mammal and a mammal is an animal, but a dog is not an animal, I would be contradicting myself. Or "No one drives on I-84; there's too much traffic." This statement contradicts itself, which makes it humorous to us.

However, this principle of noncontradiction is not universal. Our understanding of cause and effect and logical consistency is defined by the millennia of knowledge that has been produced before us, and some cultures value the contradiction rather than perceive it as invalid. This is not to say that either way of seeing the world is more or less accurate but rather to emphasize that your methods of argumentation depend tremendously on sociohistorical context.

The original chapter, Argumentation by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify a rhetorical situation (audience, genre) where pathos is the primary appeal. How about logos? Ethos?
2. What is the value of learning about logical fallacies?

ACTIVITIES

1. Choose an op-ed or a TED talk and analyze its use of rhetorical appeals. How does it use logos, ethos, and pathos to appeal to its audience? Are these effective rhetorical choices or not?
2. Watch a Super Bowl ad and analyze its use of appeals. Pay particular attention to pathos, ethos, and kairos. Logos is often in short supply in advertising. Why is that?
3. Imagine that you want to argue that your town should build a new park over a downtown parking lot. Consider how you would develop the logos, ethos, and pathos of this claim for each of these potential audiences: (a) downtown business owners, (b) city council, and (c) citizens.
4. Scroll through an opinion section on a new site and identify the kairos of three different op-eds. Why are they making this argument now? How does it tie to current events or current cultural attitudes?

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CHAPTER 7.

SITUATING ARGUMENTS

KRISTY KELLY

Arguments are all about context, and they're designed for and by *people.* People have conflicting motivations, complicated views, wide varieties of values, and ideological commitments, and they carry assumptions, both examined and unexamined, that shape their receptivity toward a particular argument. If you are going to persuade anyone, you need to understand as much as you can about those values, motivations, and assumptions before you can get them to listen to you, let alone act based on your argument.

Let's look at an example. Let's say you've just moved into an apartment with three new roommates who've already lived together for a year before you moved in. Since you're new to the living situation, you'd want to take some time to understand their preferences, routines, and opinions before you started making changes around the apartment. You certainly wouldn't get a cat before realizing that one of your new roommates has a cat allergy—or if you did, it would be pretty rude.

But more subtly than that, you'd need to understand the internal dynamics of the roommate situation before you influence it yourself. Take a smaller example. Maybe your roommates have a friend that comes over frequently but acts really obnoxious in your opinion. They're loud, they leave a mess, and they rely on your roommates to pay for food and drinks without making a contribution themselves. You want to convince your roommates to stop inviting this person over so frequently, and you start the conversation by saying, "Hey, that one friend of yours is really disruptive and rude every time they come over. Can you stop bringing them here, or at least run it past me before they come over?" You think you're being reasonable with this request, but one of your roommates gives you a look of shock and says, "What are you talking about? That person is the best"; the other roommate goes silent; and the third roommate storms out of the room.

You're baffled. Your roommates become awkward around you until you finally pull the first roommate aside and ask, "What's the deal? Why did everyone react like that?" You then learn that this friend helped your roommate who stormed out of the room through an incredibly tough time back in high school, to the point that they may never have even made it to college without this friend. The friend then went through some really big struggles themselves and had to start some medications that make their behavior really uneven—causing them to act a little strange when they visit the apartment. You feel a little bit sheepish about your attitude from before, realizing that this all makes a lot of sense now that you know the full context.

Like we said before: rhetoric is all about **context.** You can't have a decent conversation, let alone persuade someone, if you don't understand the various motivations, connections, and implicit values driving the situation you're stepping into. So that's what a good rhetorician does—they try to understand the internal dynamics of the audience she hopes to influence. You probably understand this on an instinctual level. We use this kind of sensitivity to navigate complicated situations with our friends, families, and coworkers all the time. But you may not have applied this sort of thinking to the writing you've done in academic settings. This book is here to help you situate your arguments in academic conversations, just as you would situate your arguments in social settings where you know all the stakeholders involved.

"So wait—you're saying I have to understand a person's deepest values and moral commitments before I can persuade them? How can I do that if I don't even know the people I'm talking to?" That may sound like mind reading at best and manipulation at worst. But it's really about respect and ethical argumentation. The best rhetorician listens before she argues. According to Krista Ratcliffe, listening is one of the most important elements of successful communication, particularly when it takes place across cultures or in contexts when the participants might be at odds with one another (196).

Actually *listening* to someone else is hard work. So often we're just looking for ways to shut the other person down or bolster our own viewpoints or we're merely waiting for our turn to speak. But good rhetoric doesn't work that way because it's all about taking the time to understand the audience's values and shape the argument around them rather than merely learning enough about a group of people in order to influence their views.

Rhetoricians use the term *presuppositions* to describe those tacit values that lay the foundations for arguments. Understanding the audience's presuppositions is a prerequisite to effective argumentation. Mark Longaker and Jeffrey Walker call presuppositions "the system of ideas—the ways of thinking—that the speaker and audience share, making them a community (more or less)" (14). Presuppositions involve what both the speaker and audience "love, hate, fear, admire, yearn for; their sense of what is true…what they know as 'fact,' their sense of the structure of reality"—in other words, the network of beliefs that determines how they see the world (14). Note that the speaker and audience *share* these values in this definition. It's not enough to pander to your audience, pretending that you believe in something you don't in order to get them to see your way of thinking. This is about arguing from the same playing field so that everyone shares the same rules and sense of what they're aiming for.

Here's a classic example: in *A Modest Proposal,* Jonathan Swift expresses his outrage about the inhumane treatment of impoverished Irish by making a satirical argument for his fellow citizens to enact a program to eat the poor's newborn babies (and worse) to solve the country's economic problems. Swift makes an exaggerated, ironic claim to highlight the folly of his audience's biases and beliefs, and by making his outrageous proposal seem calmly logical, well cited, and persuasive, he beguiles his audience into confronting their own hypocrisy. Not eating babies is one of the audience's latent beliefs about what is right, and Swift uses that shared value to force his audience to see how their *other* latent beliefs (in this case, tacit acceptance of inhumane treatment of their country's less well-off) are not only wrong but immoral.

That's a rather extreme example, but we can see how it applies to the roommate example as well. The roommates share a respect for the history that shapes the visiting friend's behavior, operating on the implicit assumption that it's worth tolerating some of the friend's less-than-ideal qualities in recognition of that history. This reveals some of the group's deeper beliefs

about the reciprocal nature of friendship and the importance of mutual support. You likely believe in those ideals, too, but your initial argument wasn't effective because it didn't recognize that those beliefs were in play. For Longaker and Walker, "Presuppositions determine not only what the speaker means and what the audience understands; they also determine both the speaker's and the audience's understanding of the occasion" (14). Now that you understand what's really at issue regarding the visiting friend's behavior, you're in a much better position to make arguments that resonate with the presuppositions you all share about friendship.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES

In the quote above, Longaker and Walker say that the speaker and audience become a "community" when they're engaging with arguments based on shared beliefs. It turns out that we're all members of beliefs-based communities and that we're shifting between these groups all the time in our day-to-day lives. Think about the way you might change your language, tone, or references as you switch between friend groups or social situations. You wouldn't use the same inside jokes that you formed with your college friends with your friends from high school because they wouldn't make sense. It also takes a little time to gain a keen sense of the underlying values in a friend group, as we saw with the roommate example.

Some of those same principles apply to our interactions with social, political, professional, or cultural communities we belong to. Rhetoricians use the term *discourse community* to refer to a group that uses a shared language to work toward mutual goals and operate on shared values. Discourse communities are usually organized around a specific purpose or philosophy, and they establish patterns and conventions for communication to work toward their goals. Academic disciplines, activist groups, athletic teams, and religious groups all count as discourse communities, since they all have their own patterns of communication that help them achieve concrete outcomes as a group.

The idea of *shared language* is crucial to understanding what makes a discourse community tick. Imagine stumbling into an advanced biochemistry class when you'd never even taken an introductory chemistry course or walking into a busy restaurant kitchen and hearing the chef shout orders to the kitchen staff. You'd have no idea what anyone was talking about! That's because, as composition scholar Dan Melzer points out, discourse communities use "specialized terms," which linguist John Swales has also called "lexis," to communicate as specifically as possible about the concepts that matter to their community (102). Those specialized terms allow discourse communities to advance their knowledge and communicate in concrete ways as they work to solve problems, from ensuring consistency in a restaurant kitchen to producing reliable results in a biochemistry lab.

At this point, you might be tempted to say, "Oh, cool, so that means pretty much everything is a discourse community if it uses language to solve problems. My friends and I make up a discourse community when we're discussing the problem of whether to get Taco Bell or Jack in the Box." Well, not quite. A discourse community needs to have consistent, traceable goals that are at least somewhat publicly oriented so that potential members can see what the group is all about and how communication contributes to those goals. A private group chat between housemates probably wouldn't count as a discourse community, but a subreddit devoted to discussion of the game *Animal Crossing* would. In order to count as a discourse community, a group needs to arrive at patterns that render its communication legible to people outside the community as well. A housemates' group chat might have shared goals of setting chores

or making plans, but it's not designed to communicate those goals to anyone beyond your housemates. An *Animal Crossing* subreddit, while focused on the relatively loose goal of enjoying a video game, must establish rules and patterns that make it possible for newcomers to see how and why the community functions.

Any discourse community, regardless of its purpose, needs to use language consistently enough for anyone to be able to join, even if there is a learning curve in understanding all the patterns, terms, and expectations. In a discourse community, language functions as a system, a durable set of tools that anyone should be able to pick up and use. Dan Melzer emphasizes the centrality of *genre* in discourse communities, showing how the shared characteristics of genres help create predictable and accessible patterns of communication that make a group's goals easier to achieve. You might think about a lab report as a genre in the discourse community of biochemistry: lab reports contain concrete conventions that allow experimenters to secure reliable results. Similarly, posts to the *Animal Crossing* subreddit need to follow the community rules to ensure that communication remains on topic, appropriate, and aligned with the broader goals of the discourse community. As Melzer points out, "Genres arise out of social purposes, and they're a form of social action within discourse communities" (103–104). From *Animal Crossing* to biochem, members of a discourse community need consistent language to meet their goals. This is ultimately why rhetoricians care about discourse communities: because they show us how people use language as a system to share ideas and get things done.

STASIS QUESTIONS

So we understand that it's important to get a well-rounded sense of an issue and determine what values are at play before we try to intervene with an argument. We also understand that we need consistent discursive tools to help us understand and pursue shared goals. One set of tools at our disposal is the **stasis questions**, a simple series of four questions that can help you identify where disagreement rests on a particular issue. The idea of "stasis" refers to that area of disagreement, where a given group can't yet move forward in consensus on how they'd answer the question at hand. The following are the different types of stasis questions:

- *Questions of fact:* Does X exist?
- *Questions of definition:* What is X? How does X differ from Y?
- *Questions of evaluation:* Is X good? What are its causes/effects?
- *Questions of policy:* What should we do about X?

These look pretty simple, right? They are! Yet they can yield some really complex insights about a particular discourse community's beliefs—and the answers to the same set of stasis questions can have completely different answers, depending on what discourse community you're asking. Take climate change, for example. In some political contexts, there are still disagreements about whether climate change even exists or what causes it. For the scientists who believe in the data about the existence of climate change, discussions have moved into the policy realm to consider how we can combat the impacts of climate change. So while some politicians are still at the level of stasis on whether climate change is a fact, climate scientists are deliberating at the level of policy.

You can also use the stasis questions to brainstorm the inquiries that are important to be able to answer in a given topic. They can help you take stock and figure out what aspect of an issue demands further analysis. Let's say you're considering writing an essay about homelessness in your area but you're not sure where to start. You might brainstorm a set of questions such as this:

- *Questions of fact:* Does homelessness exist in my community? How many homeless people are there in this city? How many of them are children?
- *Questions of definition:* Does one simply have to lack an address to be homeless? What about couch surfing or living in a car?
- *Questions of evaluation:* What impacts does homelessness have on people's ability to find stable employment? What conditions lead to homelessness?
- *Questions of policy:* How can we combat homelessness in this community? How can we help homeless people find jobs?

You might notice that the stasis questions increase in levels of complexity: you must know the answer to the first question to proceed to the next. If you don't understand the basic facts of an issue, you can't make an informed argument about it. You'd need to consider the impacts and effects of homelessness before you make an argument about how to fix it.

This brings us back to Krista Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening: while it's very tempting to jump into a new context or encounter a new problem by immediately proposing a solution, you must first take the time to immerse yourself in the existing conversations, contexts, and complexities before trying to make a judgment call. We saw how well it went in the roommate example when the new roommate tried to take a stance on an issue they didn't fully understand. So when in doubt, remember this tip: *Listen before you argue.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What can you do to better understand the context of an argument or position in (a) a conversation with someone you know or (b) an article or something else you are reading?

2. Are there instances in which you might try to make an argument to someone who doesn't share your presuppositions? What could go wrong in that instance? How could you reduce that risk?

3. What are the presuppositions of the following arguments? How could those presuppositions be addressed to improve your paper? (a) College tuition should be free. (b) Elementary schools should not teach students about sexuality or gender identity. (c) Everyone should eat less meat to help the environment.

4. How could you use the stasis questions to analyze other people's arguments? How could you use them in your own writing process?

ACTIVITIES

1. Choose an article from the "Opinion" section of a newspaper or website of your choice. Read it carefully, and analyze the context, presuppositions, and stasis questions that it builds upon. How do these elements add to (or undermine) the argument for the target audience? What changes would the author need to make in these areas if they were writing for a different audience?

2. Use the stasis questions to write questions of fact, definition, evaluation, and policy for a topic of your choice. How do these questions prod your thinking and raise new ideas for your argument? (If you need topic ideas for this activity, here are a few: fast fashion, vegetarianism, mask/vaccine/other public health requirements, paying college athletes.)

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CHAPTER 8.

INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS, AND CLOSE READING

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

INTERPRETATION

When *Mad Max: Fury Road* came out in 2015, it was lauded as a powerful feminist film. No longer was this franchise about men enacting postapocalyptic violence; now, there was an important place in that universe for women. A similar phenomenon surrounded *Wonder Woman* in 2017: after dozens of male-fronted superhero movies, one would finally focus on a female hero exclusively.

Some people, though, were resistant to this reading of feminism in film. I found myself in regular debates after each of these releases about what it meant to promote gender equality in film: Does substituting a violent woman for a violent man constitute feminism? Is the leading woman in a film a feminist just by virtue of being in a female-fronted film? Or do her political beliefs take priority? Does the presence of women on the screen preclude the fact that those women are still highly sexualized?

These questions, debates, and discussions gesture toward the interpretive process. Indeed, most arguments (verbal or written) rely on the fact that we each process texts and information from different positions with different purposes, lenses, and preoccupations. Why is it that some people leave the theater after *Mad Max* or *Wonder Woman* feeling empowered and others leave deeply troubled?

Interpretation is a complex process that is unique to every reader. It is a process of meaning making that relies on your particular position as a reader. Your interpretive position is informed by several factors:

1. Your purpose

In the same way you have a rhetorical purpose in writing, you often have a purpose in reading, either consciously or subconsciously. What are you trying to accomplish in this encounter with a text?

2. Your background

Your lived experiences have trained you to perceive texts with certain assumptions. This background is a blend of cultural, educational, geographical, familial, ideological, and personal influences, among many others.

3. Your posture

The stance you assume relative to a text will contribute to what meaning you make as you read, think about, and write about that text. This relative position might be emotional (what mood you're in while reading) or contextual (what situation you're reading in) and may also be impacted by your background and purpose.

4. Your lens

Related to your purpose, lens refers to the way you focus your attention on particular ideas, images, and language to construct meaning. Toward what elements are you directing your attention?

It would be simpler, perhaps, to acknowledge that we will never all agree on an interpretation of a text because of these differences. But the stakes are higher here than simply, "Is *Mad Max: Fury Road* feminist?" Interpretation gets down to the very way we encounter the world; it is about all our biases and flaws; it is about truth; it is about building new knowledges and dismantling institutional oppression. In other words, analytical interpretation is not so esoteric as slotting texts into labels like "feminist" or "not feminist." It is a practice of thinking critically, examining our sense of community and communication, and pursuing social justice.

ANALYSIS

Analysis, then, is a practice of radical noticing (like description): it invites you to attend to the details that add up to a complex reality. But analysis also involves the conscientious focus of your attention, or a lens. Just like reading glasses can bring these words into focus, an analytical lens brings specific ideas, words, or patterns into sharper focus, making them easier to process and interpret.

Sometimes, especially in English classrooms, analysis of a text is referred to as close reading. Importantly, close reading as a technique is not a magical key to meaning, not a supersecret decoder ring for a deeply encrypted code. Rather, it is a means to unpack a text and construct a unique, focused interpretation. Close reading is an iterative process: by repeatedly encountering, unpacking, and discussing a text, you can develop an analytical insight through guided and focused interpretation of its meaning.

In an analytical situation, your readerly purpose might determine your focus: for example, if you're trying to convince a friend that Wonder Woman is a feminist film, you would keep your eyes peeled for images, words, and other markers that align with such an interpretation, like situations featuring independent powerful women or an equitable ratio of dialogue spoken by female characters versus male characters. It is important to note, though, that good analysis embraces curiosity and allows you to notice elements that might contradict, complicate, or nuance your original purpose: in addition to finding evidence in support of your interpretation, you should also be aware of characteristics that push back against your expectations.

TECHNIQUES

Radical Noticing: Seeing What's On The Page

When we were early readers, we were trained to encounter texts in a specific way: find the main idea, focus on large-scale comprehension, and ignore errors, digressions, or irrelevant information. As Jane Gallop discusses in her essay "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters," this is a useful but problematic skill. Because we engage a text from a specific interpretive position (and because we're not always aware of that position), we often project what we anticipate rather than actually reading. Instead of reading what is on the page, we read what we think should be (7–17).

Projection is efficient—one email from Mom is probably like all the others, and one episode of *The Simpsons* will probably follow the same trajectory as every episode from the last twenty-odd years. But projection is also problematic and inhibits analysis. As Gallop puts it,

> When the reader concentrates on the familiar, she is reassured that what she already knows is sufficient in relation to this new book. Focusing on the surprising, on the other hand, would mean giving up the comfort of the familiar, of the already known for the sake of learning, of encountering something new, something she didn't already know.
>
> In fact, this all has to do with learning. Learning is very difficult; it takes a lot of effort. It is of course much easier if once we learn something we can apply what we have learned again and again. It is much more difficult if every time we confront something new, we have to learn something new.
>
> Reading what one expects to find means finding what one already knows. Learning, on the other hand, means coming to know something one did not know before. Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know. Close reading is thus a technique to make us learn, to make us see what we don't already know, rather than transforming the new into the old. (7–17)

Analysis as "learning," as Gallop explains, is a tool to help interrupt projection: by focusing on and trying to understand parts, we can redirect our attention to what the author is saying rather than what we think they should have said. In turn, we can develop a more complex, ethical, and informed understanding of the whole.

Perhaps the most important part of analysis is this attention to detail. If we assume that every word the author published is intentional (in order to avoid speculation about authorial intent), then we can question the meaning and impact of each word, each combination of words, each formal feature of the text. In turn, you should pay special attention to words or forms that surprise you or confuse you: the eye-catching and the ambiguous.

Symbols, Patterns, And References

There is no definitive "how-to" guide on text wrestling, but I often ask my students to direct their attention to three particular elements of a text during their interpretive processes. When you draw connections through the following categories, you are actively building meaning from the words on the page.

Symbol

A symbol, as you may already know, is an artifact (usually something concrete) that stands in for (represents) something else (often something abstract).

Here are a few examples in different media:

- In Barack Obama's 2008 campaign logo, the *O*, of course, stands in for the candidate's last name; the red lines seem to suggest a road (implying progress) or maybe a waving American flag; the blue curve represents a clear, blue sky (implying safety or well-being); the colors themselves are perhaps symbolic of bipartisan cooperation or, at the very least, the American color palette of red, white, and blue.
- In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat," the titular black cat symbolizes the narrator's descent into madness, alcoholism, and violence and later his guilt for that descent.
- The teaspoon used to hypnotize people in the film *Get Out* (2017) symbolizes wealth, power, and privilege (a "silver spoon"), suggesting that those structures are tools for control and domination.

Pattern

Patterns are created by a number of rhetorical moves, often in form. Repetition of phrases or images, the visual appearance of text on a page, and character archetypes might contribute to patterns. While patterns themselves are interesting and important, you might also notice that breaking a pattern is a significant and deliberate move.

- The episode of the TV series *Master of None* titled "Parents" (season 1, episode 2) tells the respective stories of two immigrant families. By tracing the previous generation of each immigrant family through a series of flashbacks, the episode establishes a pattern in chronology: although the families have unique stories, the pattern highlights the similarities between these two families' experiences. In turn, this pattern demonstrates the parallel but distinct challenges and opportunities faced by the immigrants and first-generation American citizens the episode profiles.
- In Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est," each line of the first stanza contains ten syllables. However, the following stanzas contain occasional deviations—more or fewer syllables—creating a sense of disorder and also drawing emphasis to the pattern-breaking lines.

Reference

A reference is a connection a text makes to another text. By making a reference (whether obvious or hidden), the referencing text adopts some characteristics of the referenced text. References might include allusion, allegory, quotation, or parody.

- C. S. Lewis's classic young adult series, The Chronicles of Narnia, is a Christian allegory. The imagery used to describe the main hero, Aslan the lion, as well as a number of the other stories and details, parallel the New Testament. In turn, Aslan is imbued with the savior connotation of Jesus Christ.

- The TV show *Bob's Burgers* makes frequent references to pop culture. For instance, the fictional boy band featured in the show, Boyz 4 Now, closely resembles One Direction, *NSYNC, and Backstreet Boys—and their name is clearly a reference to Boyz II Men.

- "Woman Hollering Creek," a short story by Sandra Cisneros, deals with the dangers of interpersonal violence. The protagonist refers frequently to telenovelas, soap operas that set unrealistic and problematic assumptions for healthy relationships. These references suggest to us that interpersonal violence is pervasive in media and social norms.

Sociocultural Lenses

In addition to looking for symbols, patterns, and references, you might also focus your analytical reading by using a sociocultural critical lens. Because your attention is necessarily selective, a limited resource, these lenses give you a suggestion for where you might direct that attention. While it is beyond the scope of this book to give in-depth history and reading practices for different schools of literary criticism or cultural studies, the following are common lenses applied during textual analysis.

As you engage with a text, you should look for touchstones, tropes, or symbols that relate to one or more of the following critical perspectives:

1. Gender and sexuality

How does the text portray the creation and performance of gender? How many people of different genders are included in the story? Do the characters in the text express gender according to traditional standards? How do characters resist the confines of gender? How much attention, agency, and voice are allowed to women, men, and nonbinary or genderqueer characters?

What sorts of relationships—familial, friendly, romantic, sexual, and so on—are portrayed in the text? How do these relationships compare with the relationships of the dominant culture? How much attention, agency, and voice are allowed to LGBTQIA2S+ people?

2. Disability

How does the text represent people with disabilities? Does the text reveal damaging

stereotypes or misconceptions about people with disabilities or their life experiences? Does the text illuminate the social/environmental construction of disabilities? How does the text construct or assume the normative body?

3. Race, ethnicity, and nationality

How does the text represent people of color, of minority status, and/or of different nationalities? What does it suggest about institutionalized racism and discrimination? How does the text examine or portray cultural and individual identities? How do the characters resist racism, xenophobia, and oppression? How do they reproduce, practice, or contribute to racism, xenophobia, or oppression?

4. Social class and economy

How does the text represent differences in wealth, access, and resources? Do people cross the divisions between socioeconomic statuses? Are characters of greater status afforded more power, agency, or freedom in the plot events or in the text more generally? How do exploited people resist or reproduce exploitation?

5. Ecologies and the environment

Does the setting of the text represent a "natural" world? How does the text represent nature, ecosystems, nonhuman animals, and other living organisms? Does the text, its narrative, or its characters advocate for environmental protection? Does the text speak to the human impact on global ecological health?

6. (Post)colonialism

What is the relationship between the characters and the setting, historically and culturally? Does the text take place in a currently or formerly colonized nation? Which of the characters are from that place? How have the effects of colonialism and imperialism influenced the place and its indigenous people? How have subjected, enslaved, or exploited people preserved culture or resisted colonialism? How does the text represent patterns of migration—forced or voluntary?

Some texts will lend themselves to a certain lens (or combination of lenses) based on content or the rhetorical situation of the author or reader. Bring to mind a recent movie you watched, a book you read, or other text you've encountered; by asking the questions above, determine whether that text seems to be asking for a certain sociocultural perspective.

The original chapter, Interpretation, Analysis, and Close Reading by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter opened with a discussion of *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Choose another movie and identify two or more popular interpretations. What does the movie have to say about gender, power, society, or something else? Can it be read multiple ways?

2. If a movie or other artifact can be interpreted in multiple ways, how does that impact its power in the culture? Does it make it more interesting or less persuasive?

3. Are symbols always crafted and created by people? Are there "naturally occurring" symbols?

ACTIVITIES

1. *Pathos practice.* Find a photograph (digital or printed) that has some sort of emotional gravity for you: it could be a picture of a loved one, a treasured memory, a favorite place, anything that makes you feel something. On a clean sheet of paper, freewrite about the photo in response to the following prompts for three minutes each:

    - Describe the photograph as a whole. What's happening? Who is in it? Use vivid descriptions to capture the photo in writing as best you can.
    - Zoom in on one element of the photo—one color, shape, object, person, and so on. How does this part relate to the greater whole?
    - Zoom out and describe what's not shown in the photo. What's happening just out of frame? What's happening just before, just after? What are the emotions you associate with this moment?
    - Now, trade photos with a friend or classmate who's also working on this activity. Repeat the same freewrite prompts and compare your responses. What do the differences indicate about the interpretive process? About context? About the position of the reader and the limitations on the author (photographer)?

2. *Advertising visual rhetoric.* Advertisements are one of the most common forms of visual rhetoric we encounter on a daily basis; indeed, advertisements are more and more prominent with the growth of technology and increasingly tailored to the target audience. The ads we encounter often blend language, images, sound, and video to achieve their intended purpose—to convince you to buy something. To practice analysis, you can close read an advertisement or advertising campaign.

    - Choose a brand, product, or corporation that you find interesting. One that I've found especially engaging is Levi's 2009 "Go Forth" advertising campaign.
    - Try to identify the subject, occasion, audience, and purpose of the advertisement. Often, there is an obvious or declared answer for each of these (the subject of the Levi's campaign is "Levi's jeans," and the purpose is "to

make you buy Levi's jeans"), but there are also more subtle answers (the subject is also "American millennial empowerment," and the purpose is also "create a youthful, labor-oriented brand").

- ✒ Identify what parts of the advertisement contribute to the whole: what colors, shapes, words, images, associations, and so on does the ad play on in order to achieve its purpose? Do you notice symbols, patterns, or references?
- ✒ Interpret the observations you collected. How do the parts contribute to the whole? What might you overlook if you weren't paying close enough attention?

3. *Radical noticing promenade.* This exercise encourages you to focus on details as a way to better understand the big picture. You will need a notebook and a camera.

- ✒ Take about twenty minutes to wander around an area that you often spend time in: your house, your neighborhood, the halls of your school, and so on. Walk slowly and aimlessly; this exercise works best when you don't have a destination in mind.
- ✒ As you wander, look around you and focus on small details—a piece of garbage on the sidewalk, the color of that guy's shoes, the sound of a leaf blower in the distance. Record (using your camera, notebook, or both) these small details. When you return to your desk, choose three of these details to meditate on. Using descriptive writing, spend a few minutes exploring these details in writing. Then consider what they might reflect about the place where you promenaded—the piece of garbage might indicate that the neighborhood is well maintained but not pristine; the leaf blower might reflect a suburban American commitment to both manicured lawns and convenience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For a fun and rewarding deep dive into analyzing literature and other texts, see Thomas Foster's *How to Read Literature like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading between the Lines*.

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PART III.

CONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS

CHAPTER 9.

FIND THE GOOD ARGUMENT

Or, Why Bother with Logic?

REBECCA JONES; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

The word *argument* often means something negative. In Nina Paley's cartoon (see figure 9.1), the argument is literally a catfight. Rather than envisioning argument as something productive and useful, we imagine intractable sides and use descriptors such as "bad," "heated," and "violent." We rarely say, "Great argument. Thanks!" Even when we write an academic "argument paper," we imagine our own ideas battling others.

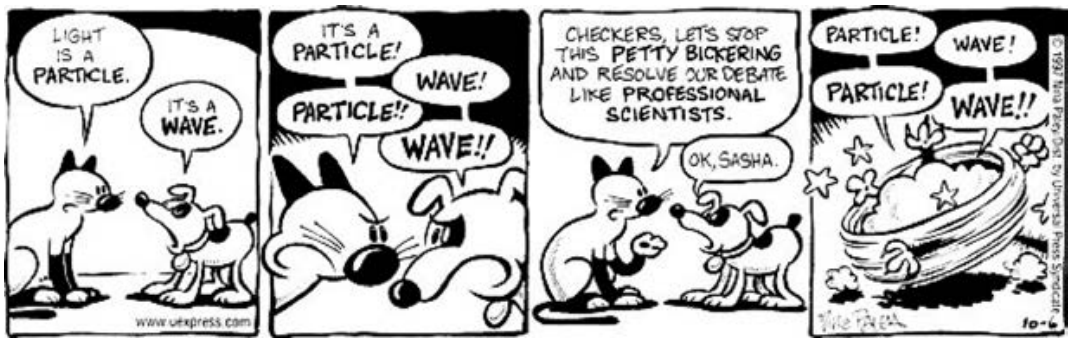

Fig 9.1 This cartoon demonstrates the absurdity of either/or arguments (© 1997–1998 Nina Paley. Image available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license)

Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain that the controlling metaphor we use for argument in Western culture is war:

> It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. (4)

If we follow the war metaphor along its path, we come across other notions such as "All's fair in love and war." If all's fair, then the rules, principles, or ethics of an argument are up for grabs. While many warrior metaphors are about honor, the "all's fair" idea can lead us to arguments that result in propaganda, spin, and dirty politics. The war metaphor offers many limiting assumptions: there are only two sides, someone must win decisively, and compromise means

losing. The metaphor also creates a false opposition where argument (war) is action and its opposite is peace or inaction. Finding better arguments is not about finding peace—the opposite of antagonism. Quite frankly, getting mad can be productive. Ardent peace advocates, such as Jane Addams, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., offer some of the most compelling arguments of our time through concepts that are hardly inactive, like civil disobedience.

While "argument is war" may be the default mode for Americans, it is not the only way to argue. Lakoff and Johnson ask their readers to imagine something like "argument is dance" rather than "argument is war" (5). While we can imagine many alternatives to the war metaphor, concepts like argument as collaboration are more common even if they are not commonly used. Argument as collaboration would be more closely linked to words such as *dialogue* and *deliberation,* cornerstone concepts in the history of American democracy.

ARGUMENT IN THE MEDIA

However, argument as collaboration is not the prevailing metaphor for public argumentation we see/hear in the mainstream media. One can hardly fault the average American for not being able to imagine argument beyond the war metaphor. Think back to the coverage of the major election cycle in 2008. The opponents on either side (Democrat/Republican) dug in their heels and defended every position, even if it was unpopular or irrelevant to the conversation at hand. The political landscape divided into two sides with no alternatives. In addition to the entrenched positions, blogs and websites such as FactCheck.org flooded us with lists of inaccuracies, missteps, and plain old fallacies that riddled the debates. Unfortunately, the "debates" were more like speeches given to a camera than actual arguments deliberated before the public. These important moments that fail to offer good models lower the standards for public argumentation.

On an average news day, there are entire websites and blogs dedicated to noting ethical, factual, and legal problems with public arguments, especially on the news and radio talk shows. This is to say not that all public arguments set out to mislead their audiences but that the discussions they offer are often merely opinions or spins on a particular topic and not carefully considered, quality arguments. What is often missing from these discussions is research, consideration of multiple vantage points, and, quite often, basic logic.

On news shows, we encounter a version of argument that seems more like a circus than a public discussion. Here's the visual we get of an "argument" between multiple sides on the average news show. In this example (see figure 9.2), we have a four-ring circus.

While all of the major networks use this visual format—multiple speakers in multiple windows, like *The Brady Bunch* for the news—it is rarely used to promote ethical deliberation. These talking heads offer a simulation of an argument. The different windows and figures pictured in them are meant to represent different views on a topic, often "liberal" and "conservative." This is a good start because it sets up the possibility for thinking through serious issues in need of solutions. Unfortunately, the people in the windows never actually engage in an argument. As we will discuss below, one of the rules of good argument is that participants in an argument agree on the primary standpoint and that individuals are willing to concede if a point of view is proven wrong. If you watch one of these "arguments," you will see a spectacle where prepared speeches are hurled across the long distances that separate the participants. Rarely do the

talking heads respond to the actual ideas/arguments given by the person pictured in the box next to them on the screen unless it is to contradict one statement with another of their own.

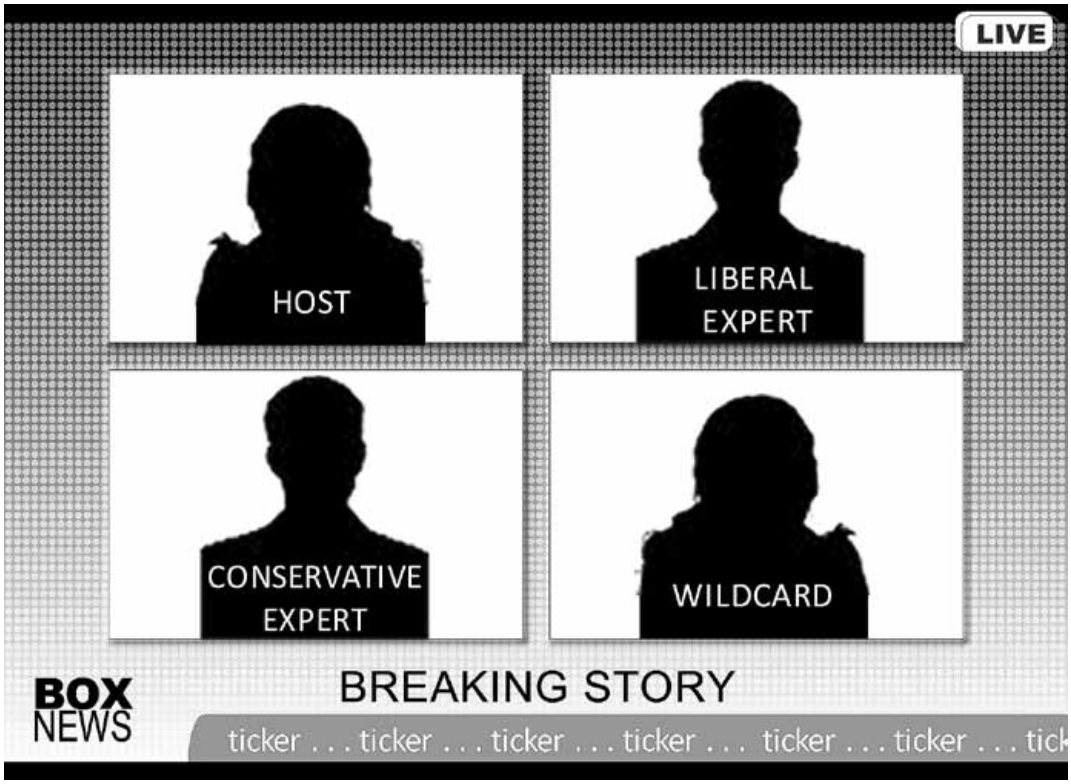

Fig 9.2 This mock-up of a typical news show created by Colin Charlton offers a visual of the attempt to offer many "sides" of an argument

Even more troubling is the fact that participants do not even seem to agree on the point of disagreement. For example, one person might be arguing about the congressional vote on health care, while another is discussing the problems with Medicaid. While these are related, they are different issues with different premises. This is not a good model for argumentation despite being the predominant model we encounter.

These shallow public models can influence argumentation in the classroom. One of the ways we learn about argument is to think in terms of pro and con arguments. This replicates the liberal/conservative dynamic we often see in the papers or on television (as if there are only two sides to health care, the economy, war, the deficit). This either/or fallacy of public argument is debilitating. You are either for or against gun control, for or against abortion, for or against the environment, for or against everything. Put this way, the absurdity is more obvious. For example, we assume that someone who claims to be an "environmentalist" agrees with every part of the green movement. However, it is quite possible to develop an environmentally sensitive argument that argues against a particular recycling program.

While many pro and con arguments are valid, they can erase nuance, negate the local and particular, and shut down the very purpose of having an argument: the possibility that you might change your mind, learn something new, or solve a problem. This limited view of argument makes argumentation a shallow process. When all angles are not explored or are fallacious or when incorrect reasoning is used, we are left with ethically suspect public discussions that cannot possibly get at the roots of an issue or work toward solutions.

Rather than an either/or proposition, argument is multiple and complex. An argument can be logical, rational, emotional, fruitful, useful, and even enjoyable. As a matter of fact, the idea that argument is necessary (and therefore not always about war or even about winning) is an important notion in a culture that values democracy and equity. In America, where nearly everyone you encounter has a different background and/or political or social view, skill in arguing seems to be paramount, whether you are inventing an argument or recognizing a good one when you see it.

The remainder of this chapter takes up this challenge—inventing and recognizing good arguments (and bad ones). From classical rhetoric, to Toulmin's model, to contemporary pragma-dialectics, this chapter presents models of argumentation beyond pro and con. Paying more attention to the details of an argument can offer a strategy for developing sound, ethically aware arguments.

MODELS OF ARGUMENTATION

So far, I have listed some obstacles to good argument. I would like to discuss one other. Let's call it the mystery factor. Many times I read an argument, and it seems great on the surface, but I get a strange feeling that something is a bit off. Before studying argumentation, I did not have the vocabulary to name that strange feeling. Additionally, when an argument is solid, fair, and balanced, I could never quite put my finger on what distinguished it from other similar arguments. The models for argumentation below give us guidance in revealing the mystery factor and naming the qualities of a logical, ethical argument.

Classical Rhetoric

In James Murphy's translation of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria,* he explains that "education for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends" (xxi). The result of a life of learning, for Quintilian, is a perfect speech where "the student is given a statement of a problem and asked to prepare an appropriate speech giving his solution" (xxiii). In this version of the world, a good citizen is always a *public* participant. This forces the good citizen to know the rigors of public argumentation: "Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and powerful action in public affairs" (xxvii). For Quintilian, learning to argue in public is a lifelong affair. He believed that the "perfect orator…cannot exist unless he is above all a good man" (6). Whether we agree with this or not, the hope for ethical behavior has been a part of public argumentation from the beginning.

The ancient model of rhetoric (or public argumentation) is complex. As a matter of fact, there is no single model of ancient argumentation. Plato claimed that the Sophists, such as Gorgias, were spin doctors weaving opinion and untruth for the delight of an audience and to the detriment of their moral fiber. For Plato, at least in the Phaedrus, public conversation was only useful if one applied it to the search for truth. In the last decade, the work of the Sophists has been redeemed. Rather than spin doctors, Sophists like Isocrates and even Gorgias, to some degree, are viewed as arbiters of democracy because they believed that many people, not just male, property-holding, Athenian citizens, could learn to use rhetoric effectively in public.

Aristotle gives us a slightly more systematic approach. He is very concerned with logic. For this reason, much of what I discuss below comes from his work. Aristotle explains that most men participate in public argument in some fashion. It is important to note that by "men," Aristotle

means citizens of Athens: adult males with the right to vote, not including women, foreigners, or slaves. Essentially this is a homogenous group by race, gender, and religious affiliation. We have to keep this in mind when adapting these strategies to our current heterogeneous culture. Aristotle explains,

> For to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art. (Honeycutt 1354a I i)

For Aristotle, inquiry into this field was artistic in nature. It required both skill and practice (some needed more of one than the other). Important here is the notion that public argument can be systematically learned.

Aristotle did not dwell on the ethics of an argument in *Rhetoric* (he leaves this to other texts). He argued that "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" and finally that "things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature, practically always easier to prove and easier to believe in" (Honeycutt 1355a I i).

As a culture, we are skeptical of this kind of position, though I think that we do often believe it on a personal level. Aristotle admits in the next line that there are people who will use their skills in rhetoric for harm. As his job in this section is to defend the use of rhetoric itself, he claims that everything good can be used for harm, so rhetoric is no different from other fields. If this is true, there is even more need to educate the citizenry so that they will not be fooled by unethical and untruthful arguments.

Inductive And Deductive Reasoning

For many, logic simply means reasoning. To understand a person's logic, we try to find the structure of their reasoning. Logic is not synonymous with fact or truth, though facts are part of evidence in logical argumentation. You can be logical without being truthful. This is why more logic is not the only answer to better public argument.

Our human brains are compelled to categorize the world as a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism allows for quicker thought. Two of the most basic logical strategies include inductive and deductive reasoning. **Deductive reasoning** (see figure 9.3) starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, and so on and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (e.g., "All cats hate water; therefore, my neighbor's cat will not jump in our pool"). While the first premise is the most general, the second premise is a more particular observation. So the argument is created through common beliefs/observations that are compared to create an argument. For example,

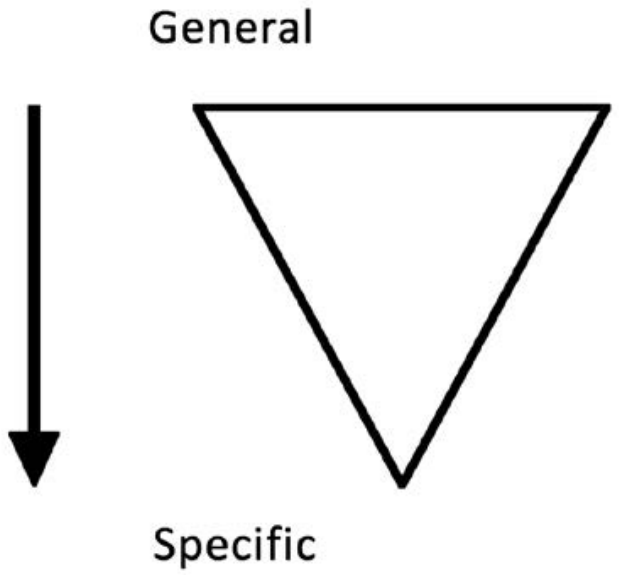

Fig 9.3 Deductive reasoning

Major Premise: People who burn flags are unpatriotic.
Minor Premise: Sara burned a flag.
Conclusion: Sara is unpatriotic.

The above is called a *syllogism.* As we can see in the example, the major premise offers a general belief held by some groups and the minor premise is a particular observation. The conclusion is drawn by comparing the premises and developing a conclusion. If you work hard enough, you can often take a complex argument and boil it down to a syllogism. This can reveal a great deal about the argument that is not apparent in the longer, more complex version.

Stanley Fish, professor and *New York Times* columnist, offers the following syllogism in his July 22, 2007, blog entry titled "Democracy and Education": "The syllogism underlying these comments is (1) America is a democracy (2) Schools and universities are situated within that democracy (3) Therefore schools and universities should be ordered and administered according to democratic principles."

Fish offered the syllogism as a way to summarize the responses to his argument that students do not, in fact, have the right to free speech in a university classroom. The responses to Fish's standpoint were vehemently opposed to his understanding of free speech rights and democracy. The responses are varied and complex. However, boiling them down to a single syllogism helps summarize the primary rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint.

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see figure 9.4). Inductive reasoning starts with a particular or local statement and moves to a more general conclusion. I think of inductive reasoning as a stacking of evidence. The more particular examples you give, the more it seems that your conclusion is correct.

Inductive reasoning is a common method for arguing, especially when the conclusion is an obvious probability. Inductive reasoning is the most common way that we move around in the world. If we experience something habitually, we reason that it will happen again. For example, if we walk down a city street and every person smiles, we might reason that this is a "nice town."

This seems logical. We have taken many similar, particular experiences (smiles) and used them to make a general conclusion (the people in the town are nice).

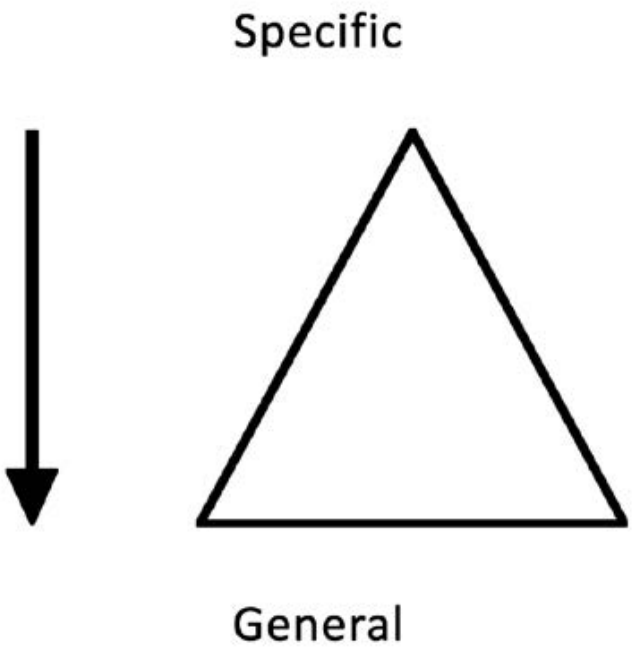

Fig 9.4 Inductive reasoning

Most of the time, this reasoning works. However, we know that it can also lead us in the wrong direction. Perhaps the people were smiling because we were wearing inappropriate clothing (country togs in a metropolitan city), or perhaps only the people living on that particular street are "nice" and the rest of the town is unfriendly. Research papers sometimes rely too heavily on this logical method. Writers assume that finding ten versions of the same argument somehow proves that the point is true.

Here is another example: In Ann Coulter's book *Guilty: Liberal "Victims" and Their Assault on America*, she makes her (in)famous argument that single motherhood is the cause of many of America's ills. She creates this argument through a piling of evidence. She lists statistics by sociologists; she lists all the single moms who killed their children; she lists stories of single mothers who say outrageous things about their lives, children, or marriages in general; and she ends with a list of celebrity single moms that most would agree are not good examples of motherhood. Through this list, she concludes, "Look at almost any societal problem and you will find it is really a problem of single mothers" (36). While she could argue, from this evidence, that being a single mother is difficult, the generalization that single motherhood is the root of social ills in America takes the inductive reasoning too far. Despite this example, we need inductive reasoning because it is the key to analytical. To write an "analysis paper" is to use inductive reasoning.

Most academic arguments in the humanities are inductive to some degree. When you study humanity, nothing is certain. When observing or making inductive arguments, it is important to get your evidence from many different areas, judge it carefully, and acknowledge the flaws. Inductive arguments must be judged by the quality of the evidence, since the conclusions are drawn directly from a body of compiled work.

The Aristotelian Appeals

"The appeals" offer a lesson in rhetoric that sticks with you long after the class has ended. Perhaps it is the rhythmic quality of the words (ethos, logos, pathos) or simply the usefulness of the concept. Aristotle imagined logos, ethos, and pathos as three kinds of artistic proof. Essentially, they highlight three ways to appeal to or persuade an audience: "(1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in its various forms, (3) to understand emotions" (Honeycutt 1356a I i).

While Aristotle and others did not explicitly dismiss emotional and character appeals, they found the most value in logic. Contemporary rhetoricians and argumentation scholars, however, recognize the power of emotions to sway us. Even the most stoic individuals have some emotional threshold over which no logic can pass. For example, we can seldom be reasonable when faced with a crime against a loved one, a betrayal, or the face of an adorable baby.

The easiest way to differentiate the appeals is to imagine selling a product based on them. Until recently, car commercials offered a prolific source of logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

How to sell a car: a guide by Aristotle

Aristotelian Appeal	Definition	The Car Commercial
Logos	Using logic as proof for an argument. For many students, this takes the form of numerical evidence. But as we have discussed above, logical reasoning is a kind of argumentation.	(Syllogism) Americans love adventure—Ford Escape allows for off-road adventure—Americans should buy a Ford Escape, or: The Ford Escape offers the best financial deal.
Ethos	Calling on particular shared values (patriotism), respected figures of authority (Martin Luther King Jr.), or one's own character as a method for appealing to an audience.	Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape, or: [Insert favorite celebrity] drives a Ford Escape.
Pathos	Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your audience.	Images of a pregnant woman being safely rushed to a hospital. Flash to two car seats in the back seat. Flash to family hopping out of their Ford Escape and witnessing the majesty of the Grand Canyon, or: After an image of a worried mother watching her sixteen-year-old daughter drive away: "Ford Escape takes the fear out of driving."

The appeals are part of everyday conversation, even if we do not use the Greek terminology. Understanding the appeals helps us make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.

Toulmin: Dissecting The Everyday Argument

Philosopher Stephen Toulmin studies the arguments we make in our everyday lives. He developed his method out of frustration with logicians (philosophers of argumentation) that studied argument in a vacuum or through mathematical formulations:

All A are B. All B are C.
Therefore, all A are C. (van Eemeren et al. 131)

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or in some other context because real arguments are much more complex than the syllogisms that make up the bulk of Aristotle's logical program. Toulmin offers the contemporary writer/reader a way to map an argument. The result is a visualization of the argument process. This map comes complete with vocabulary for describing the parts of an argument. The vocabulary allows us

to see the contours of the landscape—the winding rivers and gaping caverns. One way to think about a "good" argument is that it is a discussion that hangs together, a landscape that is cohesive (we can't have glaciers in our desert valley). Sometimes we miss the faults of an argument because it sounds good or appears to have clear connections between the statement and the evidence when in truth the only thing holding the argument together is a lovely sentence or an artistic flourish.

For Toulmin, argumentation is an attempt to justify a statement or a set of statements. The better the demand is met, the higher the audience's appreciation. Toulmin's vocabulary for the study of argument offers labels for the parts of the argument to help us create our map.

Toulmin's terms for the study of argument

Terms	Definition
Claim	The basic standpoint presented by a writer/speaker.
Data	The evidence that supports the claim.
Warrant	The justification for connecting particular data to a particular claim. The warrant also makes clear the assumptions underlying the argument.
Backing	Additional information is required if the warrant is not clearly supported.
Rebuttal	Conditions or standpoints that point out flaws in the claim or alternative positions.
Qualifiers	Terminology that limits a standpoint. Examples include applying the following terms to any part of an argument: sometimes, seems, occasionally, none, always, never, and so on.

The following paragraphs come from an article reprinted in Utne Reader by Pamela Paxton and Jeremy Adam Smith titled "Not Everyone Is Out to Get You." Charting this excerpt helps us understand some of the underlying assumptions found in the article.

"Trust No One"

That was the slogan of *The X-Files*, the TV drama that followed two FBI agents on a quest to uncover a vast government conspiracy. A defining cultural phenomenon during its run from 1993 to 2002, the show captured a mood of growing distrust in America.

Since then, our trust in one another has declined even further. In fact, it seems that "Trust no one" could easily have been America's motto for the past 40 years—thanks to, among other things, Vietnam, Watergate, junk bonds, Monica Lewinsky, Enron, sex scandals in the Catholic Church, and the Iraq war.

The General Social Survey, a periodic assessment of Americans' moods and values, shows an 11-point decline from 1976–2008 in the number of Americans who believe other people can generally be trusted. Institutions haven't fared any better. Over the same period, trust has declined in the press (from 29 to 9 percent), education (38–29 percent), banks (41 percent to 20 percent), corporations (23–16 percent), and organized religion (33–20 percent). Gallup's 2008 governance survey showed that trust in the government was as low as it was during the Watergate era.

The news isn't all doom and gloom, however. A growing body of research hints that humans are hardwired to trust, which is why institutions, through

> reform and high performance, can still stoke feelings of loyalty, just as disasters and mismanagement can inhibit it. The catch is that while humans want, even need, to trust, they won't trust blindly and foolishly. (44–45)

Fig 9.5 demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in "Not Everyone Is Out to Get You." The remainder of the article offers additional claims and data, including the final claim that there is hope for overcoming our collective trust issues. The chart helps us see that some of the warrants, in a longer research project, might require additional support. For example, the warrant that TV mirrors real life is an argument and not a fact that would require evidence.

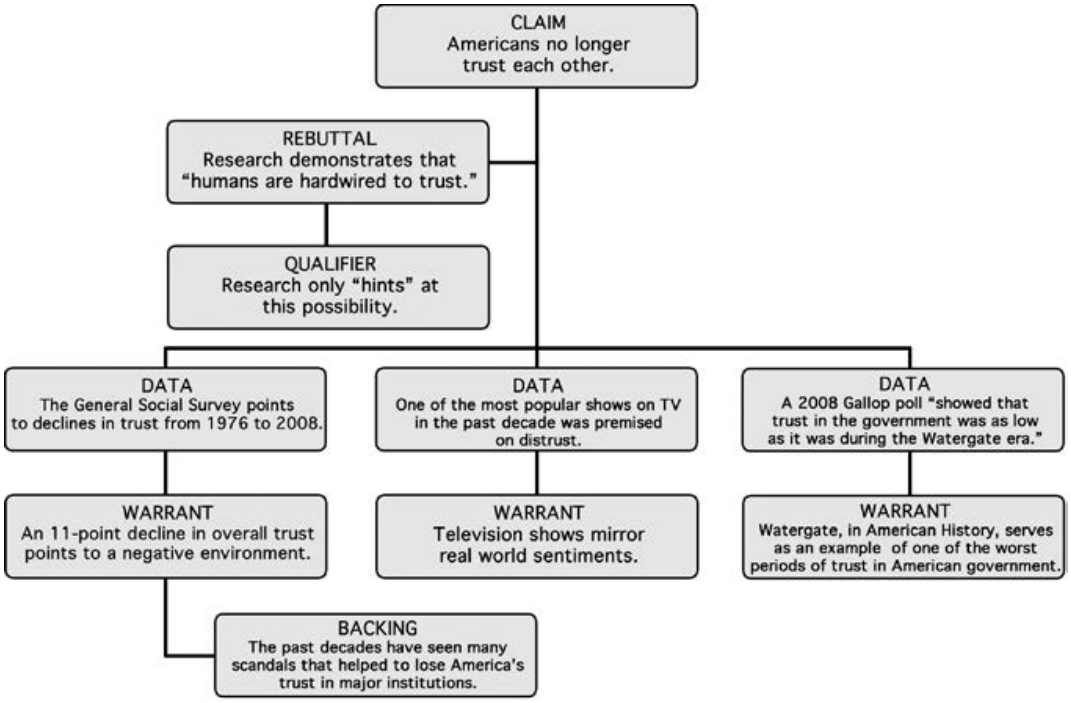

Fig 9.5 This chart demonstrates the utility of visualizing an argument.

Charting your own arguments and others helps you visualize the meat of your discussion. All the flourishes are gone and the bones revealed. Even if you cannot fit an argument neatly into the boxes, the attempt forces you to ask important questions about your claim, your warrant, and possible rebuttals. By charting your argument, you are forced to write your claim in a succinct manner and admit, for example, what you are using for evidence. Charted, you can see if your evidence is scanty, if it relies too much on one kind of evidence over another, and if it needs additional support. This charting might also reveal a disconnect between your claim and your warrant or cause you to reevaluate your claim altogether.

CONCLUSION

Even though our current media and political climate do not call for good argumentation, the guidelines for finding and creating it abound. There are many organizations such as America Speaks that are attempting to revive quality, ethical deliberation. On the personal level, each writer can be more deliberate in their argumentation by choosing to follow some of these methodical approaches to ensure the soundness and general quality of their argument. The above models offer the possibility that we can imagine modes of argumentation other than

war. These approaches see argument as a conversation that requires constant vigilance and interaction by participants. Argument as conversation, as new metaphor for public deliberation, has possibilities.

NOTE

I would like to extend a special thanks to Nina Paley for giving permission to use her cartoon for figure 9.1 under Creative Commons licensing, free of charge. Please see Paley's great work at ninapaley.com.

The original chapter, Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic? by Rebecca Jones, is from Writing Spaces vol 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the idea that "argument is a dance." What does this mean? What is appealing about this metaphor? What is difficult about it?
2. Is there value in learning about and considering how ancient Greeks approached rhetoric? Why or why not?
3. Consider the "warrant" in the Toulmin schema. How does this help us analyze or consider other people's arguments in a new way? How could it help us further develop our own arguments?

ACTIVITIES

1. Watch the famous video of Jon Stewart on the show Crossfire. What is Stewart's argument? How do the hosts of *Crossfire* respond to the very particular argument that Stewart makes? Why exactly are they missing the point?

2. Outline the pro and con arguments for one of the following issues: (a) free college tuition, (b) banning gas cars, (c) requiring vaccination to attend school. In a group, develop an argument that finds a compromise or middle ground between two positions.

3. For each of the following standpoints, create a deductive argument and an inductive argument. When you are finished, share in small groups and decide which logical strategy offers a more successful, believable, and/or ethical argument for the particular standpoint: (a) The arts should remain an essential part of public education. (b) The university should build an additional parking garage.

4. Imagine you have been commissioned by your school food service provider to create a presentation encouraging the consumption of healthier foods on campus. How would you present this to your friends? Consider the media you would use, how you present yourself, and how you would begin. How would you present this same material to parents of incoming students? Which appeal is most useful for each audience? Why?

5. Dissect a recent argument by creating a chart using the Toulmin schema. What are the warrants, backing, qualifiers, and other parts of the argument? You can do this with a published op-ed or one of your own papers.

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CHAPTER 10.

ARISTOTELIAN AND ROGERIAN ARGUMENTATION

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

To a nonconfrontational person, *argument* is a dirty word. It surfaces connotations of raised voices, slammed doors, and dominance; it arouses feelings of anxiety and frustration.

But argument is not inherently bad. In fact, as a number of great thinkers have described, conflict is necessary for growth, progress, and community cohesion. Through disagreement, we challenge our commonsense assumptions and seek compromise. The negative connotations surrounding "argument" actually point to a failure in the *way* that we argue.

Now spend a few minutes reflecting on the last time you had an argument with a loved one. What was it about? What was it *really* about? What made it difficult? What made it easy?

Often, arguments hinge on the relationship between the arguers: whether written or verbal, that argument will rely on the specific language, approach, and evidence that each party deems valid. For that reason, the most important element of the rhetorical situation is audience. Making an honest, impactful, and reasonable connection with that audience is the first step to arguing better.

Unlike the argument with your loved one, it is likely that your essay will be establishing a brand-new relationship with your reader, one that is untouched by your personal history, unspoken bonds, or other assumptions about your intent. This clean slate is a double-edged sword: although you'll have a fresh start, you must more deliberately anticipate and navigate your assumptions about the audience. What can you assume your reader already knows and believes? What kind of ideas will they be most swayed by? What life experiences have they had that inform their world view?

IMPARTIAL VERSUS MULTIPARTIAL

"But I just want to write an unbiased essay." Let's address a common concern that students raise when writing about controversial issues: neutrality. It's quite likely that you've been trained, at some point in your writing career, to avoid bias, to be objective, to be impartial. However, this is a habit you need to unlearn, because *every text is biased* by virtue of being rhetorical. All rhetoric has a purpose, whether declared or secret, and therefore is partial.

Instead of being impartial, I encourage you to be *multipartial.* In other words, you should aim to inhabit many different positions in your argument—not zero, not one, but many. This is an important distinction: no longer is your goal to be unbiased; rather, it is to be balanced. You will provide your audience not with a neutral perspective but rather with a perspective conscientious of the many other perspectives out there.

COMMON FORMS OF ARGUMENTATION

In the study of argumentation, scholars and authors have developed a great variety of approaches: when it comes to convincing, there are many different paths that lead to our destination. For the sake of succinctness, we will focus on two: the Aristotelian argument and the Rogerian argument. While these two are not opposites, they are built on different values. Each will employ *rhetorical appeals* like those discussed in chapter 6, but their purposes and guiding beliefs are different.

Aristotelian Argument

In Ancient Greece, debate was a cornerstone of social life. Intellectuals and philosophers devoted hours upon hours of each day to honing their argumentative skills. For one group of thinkers, the Sophists, the focus of argumentation was to find a distinctly "right" or "wrong" position. The more convincing argument was the right one: the content mattered less than the technique by which it was delivered.

In turn, the purpose of an *Aristotelian argument* is to persuade someone (the other debater and/or the audience) that the speaker was correct. Aristotelian arguments are designed to bring the audience from one point of view to the other.

Therefore, an Aristotelian arguer tries to demonstrate the validity of their direction while addressing counterarguments: "Here's what I believe and why I'm right; here's what you believe and why it's wrong." The author seeks to persuade their audience through the sheer virtue of their truth.

Rogerian Argument

In contrast, *Rogerian arguments* are more invested in compromise. Based on the work of psychologist Carl Rogers, Rogerian arguments are designed to enhance the connection between both sides of an issue. This kind of argument acknowledges the value of disagreement in material communities to make moral, political, and practical decisions.

Often, a Rogerian argument will begin with a fair statement of someone else's position and consideration of how that could be true. In other words, a Rogerian arguer addresses their "opponent" more like a teammate: "What you think is not unreasonable; I disagree, but I can see how you're thinking, and I appreciate it." Notice that by taking the other ideas on their own terms, you demonstrate respect and cultivate trust and listening.

The rhetorical purpose of a Rogerian argument, then, is to come to a conclusion by negotiating common ground between moral-intellectual differences. Instead of debunking an opponent's counterargument entirely, a Rogerian arguer would say, "Here's what each of us thinks, and here's what we have in common. How can we proceed forward to honor our shared beliefs but find a new, informed position?"

Examples of Aristotelian and Rogerian arguments re: appropriate winter gear.

Position	Aristotelian	Rogerian
Wool sweaters are the best clothing for cold weather.	Wool sweaters are the best clothing for cold weather because they are fashionable and comfortable. Some people might think that wool sweaters are itchy, but those claims are ill-informed. Wool sweaters can be silky smooth if properly handled in the laundry.	Some people might think that wool sweaters are itchy, which can certainly be the case. I've worn plenty of itchy wool sweaters. But wool sweaters can be silky smooth if properly handled in the laundry; therefore, they are the best clothing for cold weather. If you want to be cozy and in style, consider my laundry techniques and a fuzzy wool sweater.

Neither form is necessarily better, but rather both are useful in specific contexts. In what situations might you favor one approach over another?

The original chapter, Argumentation by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is one rhetorical situation where Aristotelian argumentation would be most effective? Why?
2. What is one rhetorical situation where Rogerian argumentation would be most effective? Why?
3. Do you personally lean more toward the Aristotelian or Rogerian model of argumentation? Why?
4. Which of these approaches is most prominent in American politics and media? How might that impact the partisan divide?
5. Do you have to choose Aristotelian or Rogerian argumentation for each paper that you write? Or can you combine the two approaches?

ACTIVITIES

1. Following the wool sweater model in this chapter, write an Aristotelian and a Rogerian approach for each of the following arguments (you can choose your position):
    - Students should/shouldn't be required to wear school uniforms.
    - Dogs/cats are the best kind of pet.
    - The internet is/isn't making us stupid.

Aristotelian and Rogerian Argumentation by Shane Abrams; Liz Delf; Rob Drummond; and Kristy Kelly is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

CHAPTER 11.

TEN RULES FOR ETHICAL ARGUMENTS

Another Way to Think about Logical Fallacies

REBECCA JONES; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Pragma-dialectics is a study of argumentation that focuses on the ethics of one's logical choices in creating an argument. While this version of argumentation deals with everything from ethics to arrangement, what this field adds to rhetorical studies is a **new approach to argument fallacies**. Fallacies are often the cause of the mystery feeling we get when we come across faulty logic or missteps in an argument.

What follows is an adaptation of Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francesca Snoeck Henkemans's "violations of the rules for critical engagement" from their book *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation* (109). Rather than discuss rhetorical fallacies in a list (ad hominem, straw man, equivocation, etc.), they argue that there should be rules for proper argument to ensure fairness, logic, and a solution to the problem being addressed. Violating these rules causes a fallacious argument and can result in a standoff rather than a solution.

While fallacious arguments, if purposeful, pose real ethical problems, most people do not realize they are committing fallacies when they create an argument. To purposely attack someone's character rather than their argument (ad hominem) not only is unethical but demonstrates lazy argumentation. However, confusing cause and effect might simply be a misstep that needs fixing. It is important to admit that many fallacies, though making an argument somewhat unsound, can be rhetorically savvy. While we know that appeals to pity (or going overboard on the emotional appeal) can often demonstrate a lack of knowledge or evidence, they often work.

As such, these rules present argumentation as it would play out in a utopian world where everyone is calm and logical, where everyone cares about resolving the argument at hand rather than winning the battle, and where everyone plays by the rules. Despite the utopian nature of the list, it offers valuable insight into argument flaws and offers hope for better methods of deliberation.

I. THE FREEDOM RULE

PARTIES MUST NOT PREVENT EACH OTHER FROM PUTTING FORWARD STANDPOINTS OR CASTING DOUBT ON STANDPOINTS.

(van Eemeren et al. 110)

There are many ways to stop an individual from giving her own argument. This can come in the form of a physical threat but most often takes the form of a misplaced critique. Instead of focusing on the argument, the focus is shifted to the character of the writer or speaker (ad hominem) or to making the argument (or author) seem absurd (straw man) rather than addressing its actual components. In the past decade, "Bush is stupid" became a common ad hominem attack that allowed policy to go unaddressed. To steer clear of the real issues of global warming, someone might claim, "Only a fool would believe global warming is real" or "Trying to suck all of the CO2 out of the atmosphere with giant greenhouse gas machines is mere science fiction, so we should look at abandoning all this greenhouse gas nonsense."

II. THE BURDEN-OF-PROOF RULE

A PARTY WHO PUTS FORWARD A STANDPOINT IS OBLIGED TO DEFEND IT IF ASKED TO DO SO.

(van Eemeren et al. 113)

This is one of my favorites. It is clear and simple. If you make an argument, you have to provide evidence to back it up. During the 2008 presidential debates, Americans watched as all the candidates fumbled over the following question about health care: "How will this plan actually work?" If you are presenting a written argument, this requirement can be accommodated through quality, researched evidence applied to your standpoint.

III. THE STANDPOINT RULE

A PARTY'S ATTACK ON A STANDPOINT MUST RELATE TO THE STANDPOINT THAT HAS INDEED BEEN ADVANCED BY THE OTHER PARTY.

(van Eemeren et al. 116)

Your standpoint is simply your claim, your basic argument in a nutshell. If you disagree with another person's argument or they disagree with yours, the actual standpoint and not some

related but more easily attacked issue must be addressed. For example, one person might argue that the rhetoric of global warming has created a multimillion-dollar green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. This is an argument about the effects of global warming rhetoric, not global warming itself. It would break the standpoint rule to argue that the writer/speaker does not believe in global warming. This is not the issue at hand.

IV. THE RELEVANCE RULE

A PARTY MAY DEFEND HIS OR HER STANDPOINT ONLY BY ADVANCING ARGUMENTATION RELATED TO THAT STANDPOINT.

(van Eemeren et al. 119)

Similar to #3, this rule assures that the evidence you use must actually relate to your standpoint. Let's stick with the same argument: global warming has created a green industry benefiting from fears over climate change. Under this rule, your evidence would need to offer examples of the rhetoric and the resulting businesses that have developed since the introduction of green industries. It would break the rules to simply offer attacks on businesses that sell "eco-friendly" products.

V. THE UNEXPRESSED PREMISE RULE

A PARTY MAY NOT FALSELY PRESENT SOMETHING AS A PREMISE THAT HAS BEEN LEFT UNEXPRESSED BY THE OTHER PARTY OR DENY A PREMISE THAT HE OR SHE HAS LEFT IMPLICIT.

(van Eemeren et al. 121)

This one sounds a bit complex, though it happens nearly every day. If you have been talking to another person and feel the need to say, "That's *not* what I meant," then you have experienced a violation of the unexpressed premise rule. Overall, the rule attempts to keep the argument on track and not let it stray into irrelevant territory. The first violation of the rule, to falsely present what has been left unexpressed, is to rephrase someone's standpoint in a way that redirects the argument. One person might argue, "I love to go to the beach," and another might respond by saying, "So you don't have any appreciation for mountain living." The other aspect of this rule is to camouflage an unpopular idea and deny that it is part of your argument. For example, you might argue, "I have nothing against my neighbors. I just think that there should be a noise ordinance in this part of town to help cut down on crime." This clearly shows that the writer does believe her neighbors to be criminals but won't admit it.

VI. THE STARTING POINT RULE

NO PARTY MAY FALSELY PRESENT A PREMISE AS AN ACCEPTED STARTING POINT, OR DENY A PREMISE REPRESENTING AN ACCEPTED STARTING POINT.

(van Eemeren et al. 128)

Part of quality argumentation is to agree on the opening standpoint. According to this theory, argument is pointless without this kind of agreement. It is well known that arguing about abortion is nearly pointless as long as one side is arguing about the rights of the unborn and the other about the rights of women. These are two different starting points.

VII. THE ARGUMENT SCHEME RULE

A STANDPOINT MAY NOT BE REGARDED AS CONCLUSIVELY DEFENDED IF THE DEFENSE DOES NOT TAKE PLACE BY MEANS OF AN APPROPRIATE ARGUMENT SCHEME THAT IS CORRECTLY APPLIED.

(van Eemeren et al. 130)

This rule is about argument strategy. Argument schemes could take up another paper altogether. Suffice it to say that schemes are ways of approaching an argument, your primary strategy. For example, you might choose emotional rather than logical appeals to present your position. This rule highlights the fact that some argument strategies are simply better than others. For example, if you choose to create an argument based largely on attacking the character of your opponent rather than the issues at hand, the argument is moot.

Argument by analogy is a popular and well-worn argument strategy (or scheme). Essentially, you compare your position to a more commonly known one and make your argument through the comparison. For example, in the "Trust No One" argument in chapter 9, the author equates the Watergate and Monica Lewinsky scandals. Since it is common knowledge that Watergate was a serious scandal, including Monica Lewinsky in the list offers a strong argument by analogy: the Lewinsky scandal did as much damage as Watergate. To break this rule, you might make an analogy that does not hold up, such as comparing a minor scandal involving a local school board to Watergate. This would be an exaggeration, in most cases.

VIII. THE VALIDITY RULE

THE REASONING IN THE ARGUMENTATION MUST BE LOGICALLY VALID OR MUST BE CAPABLE OF BEING MADE VALID BY MAKING EXPLICIT ONE OR MORE UNEXPRESSED PREMISES.
(van Eemeren et al. 132)

This rule is about traditional logics. Violating this rule means that the parts of your argument do not match up. For example, your cause and effect might be off: If you swim in the ocean today, you will get stung by a jellyfish and need medical care. Joe went to the doctor today. He must have been stung by a jellyfish. While this example is obvious (we do not know that Joe went swimming), many argument problems are caused by violating this rule.

IX. THE CLOSURE RULE

A FAILED DEFENSE OF A STANDPOINT MUST RESULT IN THE PROTAGONIST RETRACTING THE STANDPOINT, AND A SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF A STANDPOINT MUST RESULT IN THE ANTAGONIST RETRACTING HIS OR HER DOUBTS.
(van Eemeren et al. 134)

This seems the most obvious rule, yet it is one that most public arguments ignore. If your argument does not cut it, admit the faults and move on. If another writer/speaker offers a rebuttal and you clearly counter it, admit that the original argument is sound. Seems simple, but it's not in our public culture. This would mean that George W. Bush would have to have a press conference and say, "My apologies, I was wrong about WMD," or for someone who argued fervently that Americans want a single-payer option for health care to instead argue something like, "The polls show that Americans want to change health care, but not through the single-payer option. My argument was based on my opinion that the single-payer option is the best way and not on public opinion." Academics are more accustomed to retraction because our arguments are explicitly part of particular conversations. Rebuttals and renegotiations are the norm. That does not make them any easier to stomach in an "argument is war" culture.

X. THE USAGE RULE

PARTIES MUST NOT USE ANY
FORMULATIONS THAT ARE
INSUFFICIENTLY CLEAR OR CONFUSINGLY
AMBIGUOUS, AND THEY MUST INTERPRET
THE FORMULATIONS OF THE OTHER
PARTY AS CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY
AS POSSIBLE.
(van Eemeren et al. 136)

While academics are perhaps the worst violators of this rule, it is an important one to discuss. Be clear. I notice in both student and professional academic writing that a confusing concept often means confusing prose, longer sentences, and more letters in a word. If you cannot say it / write it clearly, the concept might not yet be clear to you. Keep working. Ethical violations of this rule happen when someone is purposefully ambiguous so as to confuse the issue. We can see this on all the "law" shows on television or through deliberate propaganda.

The original chapter, Ten Rules for Ethical Arguments: Another Way to Think about Logical Fallacies by Rebecca Jones, is from Writing Spaces vol 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the ethics of argument fallacies. What's the problem with violating these rules?
2. Why is it helpful to identify and learn names for these rules? How does it impact how you may see arguments in the future?
3. Is it possible to win the debate but still "lose" by some other measure? How do the ethics of argumentation connect to this question?

ACTIVITIES

1. These rules are examples of what not to do—but of course people still do them. Find an example of someone (a politician, a TikTok influencer, a journalist) willfully or unintentionally violating one of these rules. Discuss what they did and how it impacted their argument.

2. Find a print ad or short commercial on the internet that violates one of these rules. How so? Why do they do this? Is it effective? Is it manipulative?

3. Choose one of the "rules" that are established in this chapter:

    - Write a short argument (one to two sentences) about your next paper topic that clearly violates the rule. This can be a poorly framed version of your own argument, or it could be a real (but fallacious) argument that other people make about the issue.

    - Explain why this argument violates the rule. Why might someone do this in an argument? Would it be effective? (To be clear, these fallacies are examples of what not to do—but, of course, people still use them.)

    - Take the fallacious argument that you just created and correct it: write a solid argument that conforms to the rule.

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CHAPTER 12.

CONSTRUCTING THE THESIS AND ARGUMENT FROM THE GROUND UP

AMY GUPTILL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

MOVING BEYOND THE FIVE-PARAGRAPH THEME

As an instructor, I've noted that a number of new (and sometimes not-so-new) students are skilled wordsmiths and generally clear thinkers but are nevertheless stuck in a high school style of writing. They struggle to let go of certain assumptions about how an academic paper should be. Some students who have mastered that form, and enjoyed a lot of success from doing so, assume that college writing is simply more of the same. The skills that go into a very basic kind of essay—often called the five-paragraph theme—are indispensable. If you're good at the five-paragraph theme, then you're good at identifying a clearfl and consistent thesis, arranging cohesive paragraphs, organizing evidence for key points, and situating an argument within a broader context through the intro and conclusion.

In college you need to build on those essential skills. The five-paragraph theme, as such, is bland and formulaic; it doesn't compel deep thinking. Your instructors are looking for a more ambitious and arguable thesis, a nuanced and compelling argument, and real-life evidence for all key points, all in an organically structured paper.

Figures 12.1 and 12.2 contrast the standard five-paragraph theme and the organic college paper. The five-paragraph theme (outlined in figure 12.1) is probably what you're used to: the introductory paragraph starts broad and gradually narrows to a thesis, which readers expect to find at the very end of that paragraph. In this idealized format, the thesis invokes the magic number of three: three reasons why a statement is true. Each of those reasons is explained and justified in the three body paragraphs, and then the final paragraph restates the thesis before gradually getting broader. This format is easy for readers to follow, and it helps writers organize their points and the evidence that goes with them. That's why you learned this format.

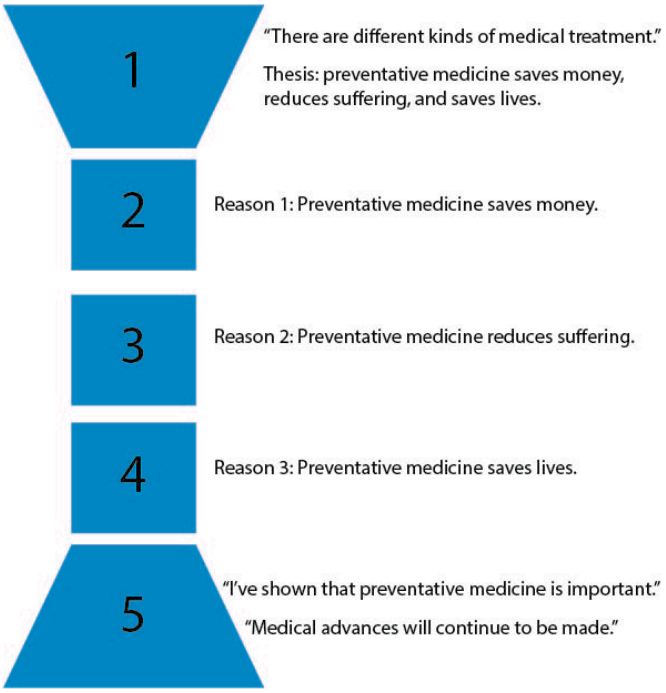

Fig 12.1 The five-paragraph "theme"

In contrast, figure 12.2 represents a paper on the same topic that has the more organic form expected in college. The first key difference is the thesis. Rather than simply positing a number of reasons to think that something is true, it puts forward an arguable statement: one with which a reasonable person might disagree. An arguable thesis gives the paper purpose. It surprises readers and draws them in. You hope your reader thinks, "Huh. Why would they come to that conclusion?" and then feels compelled to read on. The body paragraphs, then, build on one another to carry out this ambitious argument. In the classic five-paragraph theme (figure 12.1), it hardly matters which of the three reasons you explain first or second. In the more organic structure (figure 12.2), each paragraph specifically leads to the next.

The last key difference is seen in the conclusion. Because the organic essay is driven by an ambitious, nonobvious argument, the reader comes to the concluding section thinking, "OK, I'm convinced by the argument. What do you, author, make of it? Why does it matter?" The conclusion of an organically structured paper has a real job to do. It doesn't just reiterate the thesis; it explains why the thesis matters.

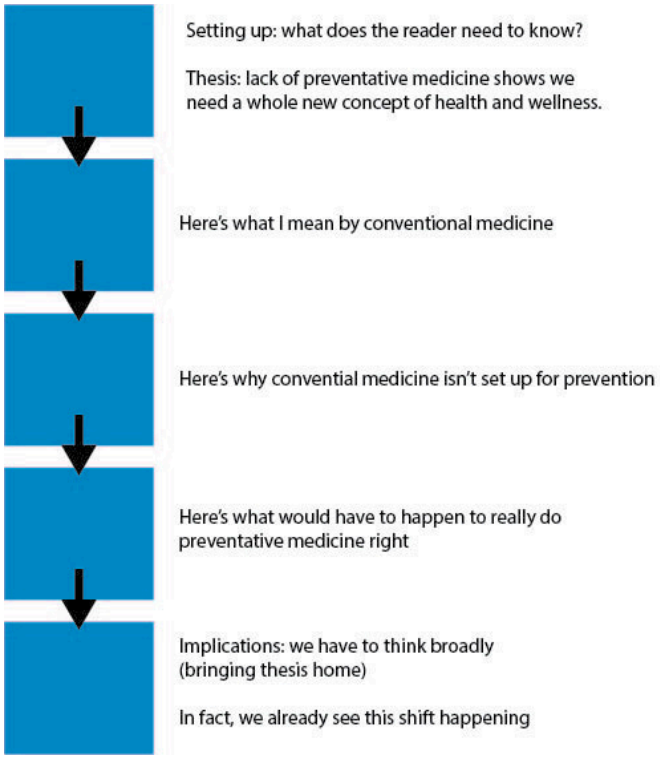

Fig 12.2 The organic college paper

The substantial time you spent mastering the five-paragraph form in figure 12.1 was time well spent; it's hard to imagine anyone succeeding with the more organic form without the organizational skills and habits of mind inherent in the simpler form. (And it is worth noting that there are limited moments in college where the five-paragraph structure is still useful—in-class essay exams, for example.) But if you assume that you must adhere rigidly to the simpler form, you're blunting your intellectual ambition. Your instructors will not be impressed by obvious theses, loosely related body paragraphs, and repetitive conclusions. They want you to undertake an ambitious independent analysis, one that will yield a thesis that is somewhat surprising and challenging to explain.

THE THREE-STORY THESIS

FROM THE GROUND UP

You have no doubt been drilled on the need for a thesis statement and its proper location at the end of the introduction. And you also know that all of the key points of the paper should clearly support the central driving thesis. Indeed, the whole model of the five-paragraph theme hinges on a clearly stated and consistent thesis. However, some students are surprised—and dismayed—when some of their early college papers are criticized for not having a good thesis. Their instructor might even claim that the paper doesn't have a thesis when, in the author's view, it clearly does. So what makes a good thesis in college?

1. A good thesis is nonobvious

High school teachers needed to make sure that you and all your classmates mastered

the basic form of the academic essay. Thus, they were mostly concerned that you had a clear and consistent thesis, even if it was something obvious like "Sustainability is important." A thesis statement like that has a wide enough scope to incorporate several supporting points and concurring evidence, enabling the writer to demonstrate his or her mastery of the five-paragraph form. Good enough! When they can, high school teachers nudge students to develop arguments that are less obvious and more engaging. College instructors, though, fully expect you to produce something more developed.

2. A good thesis is arguable

In everyday life, "arguable" is often used as a synonym for "doubtful." For a thesis, though, "arguable" means that it's worth arguing: it's something with which a reasonable person might disagree. This arguability criterion dovetails with the nonobvious one: it shows that the author has deeply explored a problem and arrived at an argument that legitimately needs three, five, ten, or twenty pages to explain and justify. In that way, a good thesis sets an ambitious agenda for a paper. A thesis like "Sustainability is important" isn't at all difficult to argue for, and the reader would have little intrinsic motivation to read the rest of the paper. However, an arguable thesis like "Sustainability policies will inevitably fail if they do not incorporate social justice" brings up some healthy skepticism. Thus, the arguable thesis makes the reader want to keep reading.

3. A good thesis is well specified

Some student writers fear that they're giving away the game if they specify their thesis up front; they think that a purposefully vague thesis might be more intriguing to the reader. However, consider movie trailers: they always include the most exciting and poignant moments from the film to attract an audience. In academic papers, too, a clearly stated and specific thesis indicates that the author has thought rigorously about an issue and done thorough research, which makes the reader want to keep reading. Don't just say that a particular policy is effective or fair; say what makes it so. If you want to argue that a particular claim is dubious or incomplete, say why in your thesis. There is no such thing as spoilers in an academic paper.

4. A good thesis includes implications.

Suppose your assignment is to write a paper about some aspect of the history of linen production and trade, a topic that may seem exceedingly arcane. And suppose you have constructed a well-supported and creative argument that linen was so widely traded in the ancient Mediterranean that it actually served as a kind of currency. That's a strong, insightful, arguable, well-specified thesis. But which of these thesis statements do you find more engaging?

- **Version A:** Linen served as a form of currency in the ancient Mediterranean world, connecting rival empires through circuits of trade.
- **Version B:** Linen served as a form of currency in the

ancient Mediterranean world, connecting rival empires through circuits of trade. The economic role of linen raises important questions about how shifting environmental conditions can influence economic relationships and, by extension, political conflicts.

Putting your claims in their broader context makes them more interesting to your reader and more impressive to your instructors, who, after all, assign topics that they think have enduring significance. Finding that significance for yourself makes the most of both your paper and your learning. Ask yourself, *So what?* Why does this issue or argument matter? Why is it important? Addressing these questions will go a long way toward making your paper more complex and engaging.

How do you produce a good, strong thesis? And how do you know when you've gotten there? Many instructors and writers embrace a metaphor based on this passage by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. (1809–1894). He compares a good thesis to a three-story building:

> There are one-story intellects, two-story intellects, and three-story intellects with skylights. All fact collectors who have no aim beyond their facts are one-story men. Two-story men compare, reason, generalize using the labor of fact collectors as their own. Three-story men idealize, imagine, predict—their best illumination comes from above the skylight. (50)

In other words,

- **One-story theses state inarguable facts.** What's the background?
- **Two-story theses bring in an arguable (interpretive or analytical) point**. What is your argument?
- **Three-story theses nest that point within its larger, compelling implications**. Why does it matter?

The biggest benefit of the three-story metaphor is that it describes a process for building a thesis. To build the first story or level, you first have to get familiar with the complex, relevant facts surrounding the problem or question. You have to be able to describe the situation thoroughly and accurately. Then with that first story built, you can layer on the second story by formulating the insightful, arguable point that animates the analysis. That's often the most effortful part: brainstorming, elaborating and comparing alternative ideas, finalizing your point. With that specified, you can frame up the third story by articulating why the point you make matters beyond its particular topic or case.

Thesis: that's the word that pops at me whenever I write an essay. Seeing this word in the prompt scared me and made me think to myself, "Oh great, what are they really looking for?" or "How am I going to make a thesis for a college paper?" When rehearing that I would be focusing on theses again in a class, I said to myself, "Here we go again!" But after learning about the three-story thesis, I never had a problem with writing another thesis. In fact, I look forward to being asked on a paper to create a thesis.

TIMOTHÉE PIZARRO
writing student

The concept of a three-story thesis framework was the most helpful piece of information I gained from the writing component of DCC 100. The first time I utilized it in a college paper, my professor included "good thesis" and "excellent introduction" in her notes and graded it significantly higher than my previous papers. You can expect similar results if you dig deeper to form three-story theses. More importantly, doing so will make the actual writing of your paper more straightforward as well. Arguing something specific makes the structure of your paper much easier to design.

PETER FARRELL
writing student

For example, imagine you have been assigned a paper about the impact of online learning in higher education. You would first construct an account of the origins and multiple forms of online learning and assess research findings on its use and effectiveness. If you've done that well, you'll probably come up with a well-considered opinion that wouldn't be obvious to readers who haven't looked at the issue in depth. Maybe you'll want to argue that online learning is a threat to the academic community. Or perhaps you'll want to make the case that online learning opens up pathways to college degrees that traditional campus-based learning does not.

In the course of developing your central, argumentative point, you'll come to recognize its larger context; in this example, you may claim that online learning can serve to better integrate higher education with the rest of society, as online learners bring their educational and career experiences together. Here is an example:

First story (facts only)

Online learning is becoming more prevalent and takes many different forms.

Second story (arguable point)

> While most observers see it as a transformation of higher education, online learning is better thought of as an *extension* of higher education in that it reaches learners who aren't disposed to participate in traditional campus-based education.

Third story (larger implications)

> Online learning appears to be a promising way to better integrate higher education with other institutions in society, as online learners integrate their educational experiences with the other realms of their life, promoting the freer flow of ideas between the academy and the rest of society.

The final thesis would be all three of these pieces together. These stories build on one another; they don't replace the previous story.
Here's another example of a three-story thesis:

First story

> Edith Wharton did not consider herself a modernist writer, and she didn't write like her modernist contemporaries.

Second story

> However, in her work, we can see her grappling with both the questions and literary forms that fascinated modernist writers of her era. While not an avowed modernist, she did engage with modernist themes and questions.

Third story

> Thus, it is more revealing to think of modernism as a conversation rather than a category or practice.

Here's one more example:

First story

> Scientists disagree about the likely impact in the US of the light brown apple moth (LBAM), an agricultural pest native to Australia.

Second story

> Research findings to date suggest that the decision to spray pheromones over the skies of several Southern Californian counties to combat the LBAM was poorly thought out.

Third story

> Together, the scientific ambiguities and the controversial response strengthen the claim that industrial-style approaches to pest management are inherently unsustainable.

A thesis statement that stops at the first story *isn't usually considered a thesis*. A two-story thesis is usually considered competent, though some two-story theses are more intriguing and ambitious than others. A thoughtfully crafted and well-informed three-story thesis puts the author on a smooth path toward an excellent paper.

THREE-STORY THESES AND THE ORGANICALLY STRUCTURED ARGUMENT

The three-story thesis is a beautiful thing. For one, it gives a paper authentic momentum. The first paragraph doesn't just start with some broad, vague statement; every sentence is crucial for setting up the thesis. The body paragraphs build on one another, moving through each step of the logical chain. Each paragraph leads inevitably to the next, making the transitions from paragraph to paragraph feel wholly natural. The conclusion, instead of being a mirror-image paraphrase of the introduction, builds out the third story by explaining the broader implications of the argument. It offers new insight without departing from the flow of the analysis.

I should note here that a paper with this kind of momentum often reads like it was knocked out in one inspired sitting. But in reality, just like accomplished athletes, artists, and musicians, masterful writers make the difficult thing look easy. As writer Anne Lamott notes, reading a well-written piece feels like its author sat down and typed it out, "bounding along like huskies across the snow." However, she continues,

> This is just the fantasy of the uninitiated. I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts. All right, one of them does, but we do not like her very much. (21)

Experienced writers don't figure out what they want to say and then write it. *They write in order to figure out what they want to say.*

Experienced writers develop theses in dialogue with the body of the essay. An initial characterization of the problem leads to a tentative thesis, and then drafting the body of the paper reveals thorny contradictions or critical areas of ambiguity, prompting the writer to revisit or expand the body of evidence and then refine the thesis based on that fresh look. The revised thesis may require that body paragraphs be reordered and reshaped to fit the emerging three-story thesis. Throughout the process, the thesis serves as an anchor point while the author wades through the morass of facts and ideas. The dialogue between thesis and body continues until the author is satisfied or the due date arrives, whatever comes first. It's an effortful and sometimes tedious process.

Novice writers, in contrast, usually oversimplify the writing process. They formulate some first-impression thesis, produce a reasonably organized outline, and then flesh it out with text, never taking the time to reflect or truly revise their work. They assume that revision is a step backward when, in reality, it is a major step forward.

Another benefit of the three-story thesis framework is that *it demystifies what a "strong" argument is in academic culture*. In an era of political polarization, many students may think that a strong argument is based on a simple, bold, combative statement that is promoted in the most forceful way possible. "Gun control is a travesty!" "Shakespeare is the best writer who ever lived!" When students are encouraged to consider contrasting perspectives in their papers, they fear that doing so will make their own thesis seem mushy and weak.

Everyone has a different way that they like to write. For instance, I like to pop my earbuds in, blast dubstep music, and write on a whiteboard. I like using the whiteboard because it is a lot easier to revise and edit while you write. After I finish writing a paragraph that I am completely satisfied with on the whiteboard, I sit in front of it with my laptop and just type it up.

KAETHE LEONARD
writing student

However, in academics a "strong" argument is comprehensive and nuanced, not simple and polemical. The purpose of the argument is to explain to readers why the author—through the course of his or her in-depth study—has arrived at a somewhat surprising point. On that basis, it has to consider plausible counterarguments and contradictory information. Academic argumentation exemplifies the popular adage about all writing: show, don't tell. In crafting and carrying out the three-story thesis, you are showing your reader the work you have done.

The model of the organically structured paper and the three-story thesis framework explained here is the very foundation of the paper itself and the process that produces it. Your instructors assume that you have the self-motivation and organizational skills to pursue your analysis with both rigor and flexibility; that is, they envision you developing, testing, refining, and sometimes discarding your own ideas based on a clear-eyed and open-minded assessment of the evidence before you.

The original chapter, Constructing the Thesis and Argument—from the Ground Up by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What writing "rules" were you taught in the past? This might be about essay structure, style, or something else. Which of these rules seem to be true in college writing? Which ones are not true in college?

2. In what contexts is the five-paragraph essay a useful structure? Why is it not helpful in other contexts—what's the problem?

ACTIVITIES

1. Put the following "stories" of a thesis in order to make a strong thesis statement:

    - Despite their appeal to patients, robotic pets should not be used widely, since they cause more problems than they solve.
    - In recent years, robotic pets have been used in medical settings to help children and elderly patients feel emotionally supported and loved.
    - Shifting affection to robotic pets rather than live animals suggests a major change in empathy and humanity and could have long-term costs that have not been fully considered.

2. Here is a list of one-story theses. Come up with three-story versions of each one.

    - Television programming includes content that some find objectionable.
    - The percentage of children and youth who are overweight or obese has risen in recent decades.
    - First-year college students must learn how to independently manage their time.
    - The things we surround ourselves with symbolize who we are.

3. Find a scholarly article or book that is interesting to you. Focusing on the abstract and introduction, outline the first, second, and third stories of its thesis.

4. Find an example of a five-paragraph theme (online essay mills, your own high school work), produce an alternative three-story thesis, and outline an organically structured paper to carry that thesis out.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers an excellent, readable rundown on the five-paragraph theme, why most college writing assignments want you to go beyond it, and those times when the simpler structure is actually a better choice.
2. There are many useful websites that describe good thesis statements and provide examples. Those from the writing centers at Hamilton College and Purdue University are especially helpful.

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CHAPTER 13.

THREE KINDS OF CLAIMS

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Once you've started to catch the rhythm of the ongoing conversation, it's time to find a way to put your perspective into words. Bear in mind that your thesis statement should evolve as you research, draft, and revise: you might tweak the wording, adjust your scope, or change your position or even your entire topic in the course of your work.

Let's look at three kinds of claims, three sorts of postures that you might take to articulate your stance as a thesis.

CLAIM OF PHENOMENON

"OBESITY RATES CORRELATE WITH HIGHER RATES OF POVERTY."

A claim of phenomenon makes an argument about whether something is true. It indicates that your essay will explore a measurable but arguable happening.

Claims of phenomenon are often more straightforward but should still be arguable and worth discussion.

CLAIM OF EVALUATION

"THE HEALTHIEST NATIONS ARE THOSE WITH ECONOMIC SAFETY NETS."

A claim of evaluation makes a judgment about the quality of something. This indicates that your essay will determine something that is better, worse, overrated, valuable, and so on.

Claims of evaluation require you to make an informed judgment based on evidence. In this example, the student would have to establish a metric for "healthy" in addition to exploring the way that economic safety nets promote healthful behaviors—What makes someone "healthy," and why are safety nets a pathway to health?

CLAIM OF POLICY

"STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD CREATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ESTABLISH FOOD-STAMP BENEFITS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY."

A claim of policy makes an argument about what should be done. This indicates that your essay will propose a plan of action to best address an issue.

Claims of policy do the most heavy lifting: they articulate a stance that requires action, from the reader or from another stakeholder. A claim of policy often uses the word "should."

You may notice that these claims can be effectively combined at your discretion. Sometimes, when different ideas overlap, it's absolutely necessary to combine them to create a cohesive stance. For instance, in the example above, the claim of policy would require the author to establish a claim of phenomenon too: before advocating for action, the author must demonstrate what that action responds to.

The original chapter, Interacting with Sources by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

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CHAPTER 14.

EXIGENCY

WHAT MAKES MY MESSAGE INDISPENSABLE TO MY READER

QUENTIN VIEREGGE

OVERVIEW

This essay defines the word exigency and explains its value as a way of gaining and holding a reader's interest. Exigency is defined as explaining not simply why a topic matters generally but why it should matter specifically at this time and place and for one's intended readership. Four different strategies for invoking exigency are given with specific examples from student writing, journalistic writing, and trade books to clarify each strategy. Special attention is given to remind students of their rhetorical context, the interests of their readership, their readers' predispositions toward the subject matter and thesis (sympathetic, neutral, or antagonistic), and the possibility of connecting their thesis with larger issues, concerns, or values shared by the writer and his or her readers. The chapter closes with a discussion of how rhetorical uses of exigency differ depending on the genre.

Imagine someone browsing the aisles of a bookstore for something interesting to read. This customer has an interest, let's say, for British rock, and, more broadly, popular music of the 1960s. After a few minutes, she finds a whole row of books, with titles about the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and the British Invasion, but she only wants to buy one. She'll have to choose among them, deciding which book grabs her interest and which deserves to be tossed aside.

To make her decision, she'll ask a question that every reader ponders when opening a book, deciphering a poem, or reading a magazine article: "Is this text worth my time?" From an author's perspective, this question may sound sacrilegious: "Of course it's worth your time, because I wrote it and pored over every word." But there's nothing more sacred to a reader than his or her own time (just recall the last time you had a paper with a fast-approaching deadline and had to sort through a stack of library research). It's not enough to prove one's argument with irrefutable logic and overwhelming evidence; it's your responsibility to hold the reader's attention long enough for them to consider that evidence and logic. Inexperienced writers often assume that readers will have as much interest in a text's subject matter as they do, or they believe that the relevance of the text to the reader will be self-evident, but readers can be impatient and must be convinced to read an argument before they can be persuaded to accept its thesis. It's the writer's job to clarify a text's relevance. Rhetoricians sometimes refer to this concept as a text's exigency, which may be defined as the circumstances and reasons why something matters—not only generally but specifically at this moment, in this place, for this

group of people (presumably one's readership). This essay will help you implement strategies to persuade your readers that your text is indispensable and that it cannot be put down, discarded, or deferred until later.

EXIGENCY IN THE CLASSROOM

Now you might be thinking that the skill of evoking exigency might be essential for most writers, but not when composing school term papers. After all, you have a captive audience; the instructor must read your paper in order to grade it. She will have to read the entire text, and there's a good chance she's already interested in the subject matter. Furthermore, if your topic is chosen for you, then it's entirely possible you don't think that it's an absolutely essential or even pressing subject matter. Why bother, then, to make an argument sound enticing, especially if you may not really care about it anyway?

The answer to that question is twofold. First, if there are twenty other students in your class writing papers over the exact same topic—or a closely related one—then you need every advantage you can get. Providing your paper with exigency will make the professor all the more eager to read it, which will improve her evaluation of it. Second, teachers will sometimes expect students to write to a more skeptical audience, someone who hypothetically could discard the paper or reject a weak argument, and they grade with this other audience in mind. The instructor will read your paper regardless of whether you provide exigent circumstances, but she will notice the difference between a paper that merely goes through the motions and one that proclaims, "Read this because it will affect your understanding of an issue of essential importance." In a sense, your teacher is assuming a different persona—pretending to be someone else, in this case a skeptical reader—and expects you to do the same. However, the skill of invoking exigency isn't simply about earning a better grade; it's about captivating your audience and reinforcing the importance of your message, inside and outside of the classroom.

STRATEGIES FOR INVOKING EXIGENCY IN WRITING

There are at least four strategies for invoking exigent circumstances in an argument. The first strategy functions as a type of umbrella for the other three. Let's call it "exigency through the audience's agenda or concerns," which involves igniting a spark of interest between your own thesis and your reader's interests. The other three strategies are variations of this approach, and the following examples will survey how some professional and student writers invoke exigency in different ways.

These four strategies illustrate that invoking exigency is more than just using an attention grabber or gimmick. An attention grabber is simply a way of turning heads; it's a visceral move that may work only temporarily, but exigency persuades the audience that they have a stake in your argument. The attention grabber focuses on flashy style, and no matter how effective it is, the best you can hope for is artificial engagement from your reader. Exigency concerns itself with subject matter, and its successful invocation makes readers care—or at least curious—about an issue.

EXIGENCY THROUGH THE AUDIENCE'S AGENDA OR CONCERNS

To demonstrate that your paper has exigency, you first need to determine why you're writing. The immediate answer to this question might be "Because it's part of my grade," and though this response is technically correct, it will not inspire stellar writing. Instead, one of the best ways to answer this question is to assume a different persona. Think of a persona as a mask that you can put on or take off as a writer. It's a "Think of yourself as" rhetorical move. You

might think of yourself as a student in one paper, a scholar involved in an ongoing literary discussion in another, or an employee proposing a detailed solution to a corporate problem in another. Once you begin to consider your persona—and your reader's persona—you can start to form an opinion about why your paper would be important. Imagine that you were assigned to write a research proposal where you had to identify a problem on the campus that you attend and develop a solution to that problem. Your audience for this proposal would be whatever individual or group could effect the change you propose. So for example, if you were proposing different library hours, then your audience might be the dean of the library.

In the preceding assignment, you would need to begin thinking about how you, as a writer, could relate to your readers in order to take hold of their attention. That means asking some of the following questions:

- What type of persona do I have as a writer? What is it that I care about?
- What type of persona do my readers have? What do they value or find especially interesting? What common assumptions do they have, and do I share any of them? Do I believe any of their assumptions are false? What agenda do they have? What motivates them?
- What pressing, essential, or surprising issue may I, as a writer, share with my readers?

If we were to take the preceding prompt as an example, then you would be tasked with defining a campus dilemma and creating a workable solution that meets the needs of everyone involved—or at least as much as possible. You're writing to someone who could presumably solve the problem, if only she knew how. However, you still need to define a pressing issue and show how it demands your reader's attention. Let's say you decided to write instead about the lack of healthy food choices on campus (this student example is hypothetical; the other examples of student writing in this chapter are authentic). Your preliminary thesis sentence may look something like this: "The office of the dean of students should work with the Food Services Department to provide students with more healthy alternatives to the numerous fast-food restaurants established on campus." That thesis sentence is clear enough, and a sympathetic reader might even already agree with you in principle: "Sure, I'm in favor of options; who isn't, especially if they're healthy." But simply because your readers agree with your thesis doesn't guarantee that they will be persuaded that something actually has to be done to effect change or even that they should read the rest of the argument. They might think, "But this is not a pressing issue, and furthermore, it's not my problem. It should be a long-term goal, so I'll wait to take a closer look at this proposal." To capture your reader's attention, you should surround that thesis sentence with exigent circumstances that explain why this is an issue that matters here, now, and especially for your reader. This involves understanding and empathizing with them so that you can connect their values with your agenda. Go through and methodically answer each of the questions above, perhaps building a table. Focus especially on finding out what matters to your reader on a daily basis, how they define their relationship to the topic you're writing about.

Table 1

Questions	Answers
What is my audience's persona?	The dean of students.
What is my persona?	A student (not simply a student-writer) who is concerned about an issue on campus.
What is my agenda?	In this case, I want to provide healthy food alternatives. I need to convince those with a position of power to assist me.
What values or concerns do my readers have?	After researching the job descriptions for the dean, I found out the dean has a mission statement. The mission statement has yielded a connection, which will require explanation but will at least hold the readers' attention.

That way when you introduce your topic, you can meet them at their level, from their mindset. For instance, look at the chart above (see table 1).

Now that the personas of both the writers and the readers have been thoroughly examined, the introduction can be written with an eye toward invoking exigency. The paragraph below represents how the thesis above may be merged with the additional contextual information in order to invoke exigency:

> The office of the dean of students at this university claims in its mission statement that it promotes a vibrant learning environment in part by "[collaborating] with institutional partners to address the needs of the student body." Furthermore, the dean wants to "support student learning" in part by "[reducing] barriers to student success" ("Dean of Students Office"). I applaud the dean's interest in how the entire campus experience can contribute to a student's ability to succeed and learn, but not enough has been done to provide students with nutritious options. Secondary schools across the country are beginning to provide junior high and high school kids with healthy meals, and researchers have well established a link between proper nutrition and learning potential. It's time for higher education to do the same. Therefore, I propose that the office of the dean of students work with the food services department to provide students with more healthy alternatives to the numerous fast-food restaurants established on campus. I am convinced that the following proposal will live up to this university's excellent reputation for improving the daily lives of its students.

This passage demonstrates exigent circumstances by finding relevant research about a correlation between nutrition and learning. But just as importantly, the student-writer researched the values and motivations of the intended audience, the dean of students. The student-writer matched language from the school's mission statement with the proposal that students should have more nutritious food options. Instead of the writer imposing an additional responsibility upon the dean's time and workload, the research proposal is framed as a way of helping the dean achieve his own goals. The tone is laudatory and encouraging: "I applaud the dean's interest" and "excellent reputation for improving the daily lives of its students." By answering the questions in table 14.1, the student has found a way to surprise the dean, showing him an added layer that complicates his mission of improving the learning environment.

EXIGENCY THROUGH A GAP IN THE RESEARCH

One of the most common methods for creating exigency in academic writing involves "creating a gap in the research," a well-worn phrase that most professors have heard and used numerous times. The strategy involves finding something new to say that contributes to an ongoing

discussion. An academic discussion in this sense can occur over several years or even decades as each scholar conducts research and contributes knowledge to what has been previously written. After discovering a gap in knowledge, a writer must simultaneously show how his point is original but somehow still connected to what has been discussed or written by others. That might sound a bit contradictory, but it's precisely the same as walking in on an ongoing discussion. If you wanted to add to the conversation, you would first need to briefly listen to discover what the group is talking about and then do your best to add seamlessly to the conversation, hopefully with your own fresh perspective. In everyday conversation, one might use transitional phrases like "Speaking of X…" or "What you just said reminds me of Y." In academic literature, this strategy usually involves briefly reviewing what others have written and then pointing out what remaining question each of them has failed to answer. It might look something like this: "Though James Lewis has contributed X to the field and Adam Mitchell has contributed Y to our understanding of this issue, both have yet to ask how Z works."

Let's see how this approach might work in a student paper. The following paper is about the detrimental effects of media monopolies on the integrity of journalism:

> The dispute over media convergence and its effects on journalistic quality, motives, and localism has been the main focus of media professionals since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reformed its regulations on cross-media ownership in 2003. Since 1975, newspapers have been barred from purchasing television stations in the same market, in order to prevent news monopolies. Now, with the opportunity to deliver news across many platforms in a single market, management has shifted their focus from news content to audience reach, causing many to wonder if and when a compromise to the media's main objective as "public watchdog" will be shifted to meet the goals of improving their company's bottom line. "The questions that this transformation raises are simple enough…what should be done to shape this new landscape, to help assure that the essential elements of independent, original, and credible news reporting are preserved?" (Downie and Schudson). Without the cooperation of the government, educational institutions, and media companies, it is almost certain that American journalism will continue to lose its focus, resulting in a three-ring media circus.

This passage does an excellent job of placing the paper's topic within a larger academic conversation. The introduction connects the writer's thesis to an ongoing debate about the "dispute over media convergence and its effects on journalistic quality, motives, and localism." Words like "dispute" emphasize the ongoing debate that scholars have about how Americans can reliably get their news. She does an excellent job of fitting herself within an existing debate with phrases like "has been the main focus of media professionals" and "causing many to wonder." These references to other writers clarify the relevance of the student-writer's argument by showing how her paper responds to problems or questions others have identified. It's like saying, "I've noticed you are very concerned about X; I have a thought about that subject too." If she only included those somewhat vague references to other writers, then the introduction would be weak, but the quotation from Downie and Schudson introduces a specific pressing question that others feel must be answered. This specific question raises the urgency of her thesis. The thesis statement is no longer the student-writer's idle thoughts about a random topic; it's a specific response to an urgent question. In this way, using the "gap in the research strategy" provides writers with a purpose for writing and readers with an answer to "So what?"

EXIGENCY THROUGH REFRAMING THE SUBJECT MATTER

Exigency is not always invoked by explaining a gap in the current research; there are times when the best way to demonstrate a topic's importance is to redefine what the issue is about. You might think of this rhetorical strategy as "reframing" an issue. Writers reframe their subject matter by shifting our understanding of the surrounding context. In other words, it's a matter of what ideas, words, memories, or beliefs we associate an issue with.

Consider, for instance, an issue that arose in the summer of 2010 in New York City. A national controversy was spurred by plans to build an Islamic cultural center a few blocks away from where the World Trade Center towers had been located before they were destroyed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (Fisher). These construction plans spurred debate about whether the cultural center was symbolically appropriate and whether it was an embodiment of American values or an insult to those values. Many people questioned whether it was appropriate for the Islamic center—sometimes referred to as the Cordoba house—to be placed near the location of a horrific terroristic attack (Fisher). Since millions of Americans who opposed the Islamic center may have felt a sense of urgency about stopping its construction, a speech in favor of the center would face a particular challenge. The speech would need to address a skeptical audience, and it would need to convey a sense of exigency about why the completed construction of the Cordoba house was indispensable for America's future (the precise opposite of the audience's perspective). New York mayor Michael Bloomberg made such an argument and crafted exigent circumstances by redefining the context. Instead of people associating the Cordoba house with "ground zero," "September 11," or religious effrontery, he needed them to associate it with America's long history of religious tolerance.

Bloomberg catches hold of his readers' attention by reframing the issue in at least two ways. First, he connects the topic of the Cordoba house to religious freedom from the founding of New York City in the seventeenth century. Early in his speech, he states, "Of all our precious freedoms, the most important may be the freedom to worship as we wish. And it is a freedom that, even here in a city that is rooted in Dutch tolerance, was hard-won over many years." Bloomberg then reviews how Jewish immigrants, Quakers, and Catholics all faced resistance from others in New York. By connecting the recent Islamic controversy to similar past conflicts, he can argue that "we would betray our values—and play into our enemies' hands—if we were to treat Muslims differently than anyone else." Only after reframing the debate from one about civic sensibility and 9/11 to one concerning religious freedom can the mayor explain why his message is indispensable to his listener. He skillfully waits until the middle of his speech to confidently assert, "I believe that this is an important test of the separation of church and state as we may see in our lifetime—as important a test—and it is critically important that we get it right." His argument that the government should not prohibit people from worshipping as they wish could have been made without these exigent circumstances, but their inclusion changes the tone from one of a defensive posture to a more vigorous one. This example provides at least three lessons about exigency:

1. Sometimes it's best to invoke exigency in the middle of the text or even in the conclusion.

2. Consider delaying invoking exigency (a) when your reader doesn't share your underlying assumptions, (b) when your reader is unaware of the ongoing academic discussion, (c) when it's more important to leave your readers with a lasting impression than it is to grab their attention immediately, and (d) when

your thesis is placed in the middle or the end of your paper.

3. Whether reframing an issue or finding a gap in the research, exigency often involves connecting one's thesis with the audience's values. Reframing an issue involves the additional step of suggesting that readers focus on a different set of values than they otherwise would.

EXIGENCY THROUGH A RADICAL REINTERPRETATION OF KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE

Sometimes writers try to surprise their readers with a bold claim, a counterintuitive idea, or a reconsidered foundational premise. Consider the following titles of bestselling books:

- *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, by Thomas L. Friedman
- *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, by Steven Johnson
- *The Wisdom of the Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economics, Societies and Nations*, by James Surowiecki

Each of these books tries to revolutionize the way that we think about their topics. The titles are crafted to provoke a confused but intrigued response: "What does the author mean by that?" "Is there something I don't know?" Bold claims can usually command attention, but only if the importance of the idea and its degree of innovation are properly established. Even if there is a radically new way of looking at something, it may appear quotidian. If you can appear to be turning the world on its head, unveiling an unseen world, or persuading people that up is in fact down, then you will have your readers' undivided attention.

RADICAL REINTERPRETATION IN STUDENT WRITING

In the following exegesis of Wendy Cope's poem "Lonely Hearts," the student-writer proffers a counterintuitive analysis of the tone of the poem. On the surface, the villanelle appears to have a light mood that speaks of unfulfilled relationships, but a darker tone surprisingly lies underneath this initial interpretation:

> Solitude. It is a fear that has crossed many a mind for ages—the idea of being alone or, worst of all, dying alone. But is this loneliness individualistic in nature? Or does it serve to represent a tragic element of the human condition: to be in a constant search of companionship, an obsession so hard-wired that we often fail to see the bonds from person to person? These are questions explored by Wendy Cope in her poem "Lonely Hearts," a villanelle written in the form of pieced-together personal ads from a newspaper. On the basic level, "Lonely Hearts" amuses and entertains, seeming to poke fun at those "lonely hearts" that place personal ads. But upon closer reading, the serious underpinnings of Cope's poem reveal themselves, and a deeper theme emerges. Through the careful use of personal ad language, villanelle form, and ambiguity of point of view, Wendy Cope illustrates the shared loneliness of the poem's speakers that ultimately renders the poem ironic.

Can you spot how the student's introduction creates a surprise? There is a slow shift in her language from a theme of loneliness expressed with a jovial tone to one of "shared loneliness" (a term that is counterintuitive itself) expressed with sobriety. The second half of the paragraph contains the thesis, but it's the first half that makes the thesis worth investigating. It invites readers to reconsider a poem that they have merely glossed over. It's like Alice going through the rabbit hole.

GENRE AND EXIGENCY: FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Each genre has its own conventions and might easily fit with one of these strategies more than others. The word *genre* refers to a set of rhetorical expectations that accompany a recurring type of writing, whether it be practical or artistic. For instance, in business writing, there are rhetorical expectations that are associated with positive newsletters and a separate set of expectations for business letters that give people negative news. There are rhetorical expectations for emails, text messages, news articles, poetry, drama, and even movie trailers, to name a few genres. Genre conventions are not hard and fast rules, but they do provide guidance. For instance, I would advise matching the genres below with the strategies to their right. Keep in mind these are merely suggestions. Any of the four strategies described above could work for any of the genres below, if creatively applied.

- *Job application materials*: Definitely "exigency through the audience's agenda or concerns" applies here. It's at the heart of any résumé or job letter. What you can do for the company is the only thing a potential employer cares about.
- *Literary analysis*: "Finding a gap in the research" is the most common strategy, but reframing the issue and creating a counterintuitive idea are wonderful approaches as well.
- *Business proposal*: "Exigency through the audience's agenda or concerns" is the most appropriate.
- *Term paper (where the topic has been discussed in class)*: With an ongoing discussion of references made in class, you could use any of the final three strategies.
- *Term paper (where the topic has been written about exhaustively or where the positions people take are predictable)*: This is the most difficult type of paper to write about (i.e., abortion, gun control, legalization of marijuana). Use the reframing technique or the counterintuitive technique to create a fresh perspective.

These strategies are oftentimes used simultaneously, and you may have noticed that there is some overlap between them. Though they may be nebulous categorizations, they provide a useful tool for providing a sense of urgency to your writing. I have personally found that when I think about exigency, it helps add passion to my writing, and it gives me a voice as a writer. Without exigency, I'm an aimless soul drifting in the dark night without a sail or a strong wind. But exigency brings with it a definition of who I am in the text (my persona), who my readers are

(their personas), and the common bonds that connect us together. If you use these techniques it will help animate your writing and motivate your readers to keep reading and carefully consider your argument.

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TEACHER RESOURCES FOR EXIGENCY: WHAT MAKES MY MESSAGE INDISPENSABLE TO MY READER BY QUENTIN VIEREGGE

OVERVIEW

Discussing exigency can help students not simply think about the "so what" of their writing but also consider and analyze the prompt more carefully. I've found that students go through a layered understanding of a prompt, at first understanding the basic concept and then looking more carefully at the prompt's specific requirements. But what makes their papers far more effective is if they can take ownership of the prompt—in other words, if they can consider a way of making it more than simply an assignment, making it an opportunity for them to address an issue they are passionate about to a specific audience. To help them develop this sense of audience and purpose, a discussion of exigency can be beneficial. This is one reason to talk about exigency at the beginning of the writing project. The discussion about it will differ depending on how narrowly their purpose and audience are being defined by the writing prompt, but either way, the beginning of the project is the first and probably best place to discuss exigency.

It can also be helpful to discuss exigency when students are writing their introductory paragraphs or concluding paragraphs or as they are revising their drafts to craft a more compelling argument. These three points in the composition process are what I think of as global points, where students have an opportunity to look at the writing assignment holistically. As a reader—in and out of the classroom—the introduction and conclusion are often where I find exigent moments, and I tell students this, perhaps bringing in examples for them to review and discuss. As a writer, it's often in the middle or at the end of the writing process that I can better grasp the exigency of an argument for both myself and my readers, and this can be a point of discussion in class as well.

As my chapter asserts, asking students to think in terms of author and reader personas may also help lead to discussions on exigency. Asking students to think of personas invites them to consider what agenda or values correspond with that persona and how those considerations can help writers establish connections with their readers. Finally, exigency isn't just connected to global issues like persona, audience, and purpose; it can also be thought of in terms of templates and well-worn rhetorical moves. Showing students rhetorical patterns connected to exigency, such as how writers explain a "gap in the research," can help make it clear how they can articulate exigency at the sentence or passage level.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of any other strategies for invoking exigency other than those listed above?
2. Have you ever struggled to think of a purpose behind your writing for a particular paper? What did you do to resolve this problem?
3. What nonfiction texts have you read that made you feel the text's subject matter was absolutely essential to you?
4. Find and read an academic article, political speech, or magazine article that employs one of these strategies. Which strategy does it employ, and how effective is the text at invoking exigency?
5. What genres can you think of that are not mentioned in this article? In what ways do authors typically use exigency in those genres?

The original chapter, Exigency: What Makes My Message Indispensable to My Reader by Quentin Vieregge, is from Writing Spaces vol 3

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CHAPTER 15.

STRONG WRITERS STILL NEED REVISION

LAURA GIOVANELLI; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

The fantasy that good writers summon forth beautiful, lean, yet intricate sentences onto a page without sweating is an unhealthy fiction, and it is wrong. What writers need is revision. Novice writers, experienced writers, *all* writers. Anyone interested in writing clearer, stronger, more persuasive and passionate prose, even those of us who are procrastinators panicking because we need to get a project finished or a paper written and it's 2:00 a.m. the night before our deadline—writers need revision because revision is not a discrete step. Revision is not the thing writers do when they're done writing. Revision *is* the writing.

It's important to keep in mind I'm not talking about revision as proofreading or copyediting; no amount of grammatical, spelling, and style corrections transforms a piece of writing like focused attention to fundamental questions about purpose, evidence, and organization. That, to me, is revision: the heavy lifting of working through why I'm writing, who I'm writing for, and how I structure writing logically and effectively.

REVISION IS WRITING

My writing students are usually relieved to hear that published authors often find writing just as fraught as they do. Like college students, people paid to write—the journalists and the novelists and the technical writers—more often than not despair at the difference between what's in their heads and hearts and what ends up on the page the first time around. The professionals are just a little better at waiting things out, pushing through what Anne Lamott calls "shitty first drafts" and all the ones that follow, the revision of a tenth and a thirteenth and a twenty-third draft.

In class, I show a YouTube video by Tim Weninger, a computer scientist and engineer at the University of Notre Dame. In the video, Weninger stitches together his revisions of a research paper. In my class, we play a game, guessing how many revisions Weninger did. The answer—463!—almost always surprises them. It still sometimes surprises me. And sure, some of those revisions are small, fiddly changes. But most of the time, even watching this quickly on classroom monitors, my students notice Weninger aims for the jugular in his writing. He's after a wholesale overhaul of his argument and of his larger work.

However, talking about revision in terms of numbers of drafts implies that all writing, all writers, and all revision work one way: hit your target draft number, like your daily Fitbit goals, and you magically get good writing. But more revision isn't necessarily better. Effective revising isn't making changes for the sake of change but instead making smarter changes. And professional writers—practiced writers—have this awareness even if they aren't aware of it. In Stephen King's memoir *On Writing*, he calls this instinct the *ideal reader:* an imagined person a writer knows and trusts but rewrites in response to, a kind of collaborative dance between writer and reader. To writers, the act of *writing* is an act of *thinking.*

One writer in a landmark study comparing the habits of experienced writers to those of novices called their first drafts "the kernel." If you're someone like me who is constantly struggling to demystify this complex cognitive thing we humans do, that metaphor of writing as a seed is revelatory. Revision is not a sign of weakness or inexperience or poor writing. *It is the writing.* The more writers push through chaos to get to the good stuff, the more they revise. The more writers revise, whether that be the keystrokes they sweat in front of a blinking, demanding cursor or the unofficial revising they do in our heads when they're showering or driving or running, the more the ideal reader becomes a part of their craft and muscle memory, *of who they are* as writers, so at some point, they may not know where the writing stops and the revision begins.

Because writing and revision are impossible to untangle, revision is just as situational and interpretive as writing. In other words, writers interact with readers—writing and revision are social, responsive, and communal. Take Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. King gave a rough draft of the most famous American speech of the twentieth century to eighteen hundred people crammed into a gymnasium in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in November of 1962. Seven months later, King gave another revision of the speech to a gathering of political and spiritual leaders, musicians, and activists in Detroit. In August of 1963, in front of the Lincoln Memorial, King riffed and reworked and rebuilt what he preached in Rocky Mount and Detroit, ad-libbing, deleting, and flipping lines. "I Have a Dream" is what Americans remember today, engraved in our collective memories, archives, and textbooks as a symbol of an entire era, but King's famous refrain singing his vision for a less racially divided country was not even part of his speech's official text that day.

Was King writing a new speech? Was he done with the Rocky Mount or Detroit one? "I Have a Dream" was not one speech but many, written and rewritten. King was not content to let his words sit, but like any practiced writer working out his muscles, he revised and riffed, adapting it for new audiences and purposes.

REVISION: ALIVE AND KICKING

All this revision talk could lead to the counterargument that revision is a death spiral, a way of shoving off the potential critique of a finished draft forever. Tinkering is something we think of as quaint but not very efficient. Writers can always make the excuse that something is a work in progress, that they just don't have time for all this revision today. But this critique echoes the point that writing is social and responsive to its readers. Writing is almost always meant to be read and responded to, not hoarded away.

A recent large-scale study on writing's impact on learning supports the idea that specific interventions in the writing process matter more in learning to write rather than how much

students are writing (Anderson et al.). Among these useful interventions are participation in a lively revision culture and an interactive and social writing process such as talking over drafts—soliciting feedback from instructors and classmates.

Extending the modern definition of writing more broadly to composing in any medium, revision is as bound to writing as breathing is to living. If anything, humans are doing more writing and revision today. Sure, there are people who call themselves writers and mean that it is part of their formal job title. But then there are the greater numbers of us who are writers but don't label ourselves as such, the millions of us just noodling around on Facebook or Snapchat or Instagram. Facebook and Instagram have an edit feature on posts. Google Docs includes a revision history tool. When we send a text and our buzzy little e-devices kick in with autocorrect, changing Linkin Park to Kinky Park, we compensate with frantic asterisks. We edit our comments or return to clarify them; we cannot resist. Revision as writing is an idea that we should not abandon or trash—and it may not even be possible to do so if we tried.

The original chapter, Strong Writing and Writers Don't Need Revision by Laura Giovanelli, is from Bad Ideas about Writing

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. One of the headings in this essay is a common saying in the field of rhetoric and composition: "revision is writing" (or sometimes "writing is revision"). What does this mean? What does this perspective suggest about the writing process or how experienced writers write?
2. What revision strategies have you used in the past? What has been effective for you?
3. What gets in the way of revision? What makes this a difficult process to undertake?
4. How does the story about Dr. King change your understanding or perspective on MLK and his fame as one of history's greatest public speakers?
5. Consider the story about Dr. King's revision process as he wrote "I Have a Dream." How is the revision process different in public speaking than in writing a paper? What could transfer, and what could not?

ACTIVITIES

1. Read Mike Birbiglia's article "6 Tips for Getting Your Solo Play to Broadway." Although his tone is humorous—Birbiglia is a comedian—he has some interesting things to say about the revision process in developing his stand-up special.

    - ✒ How does Birbiglia's process compare or contrast with what we know of Dr. King's?
    - ✒ Do a little research on other stand-up comedians' processes. What surprises you about what you learn? What can you take away?

2. Choose one revision strategy that's new to you (either from discussion in class or from your own research). Try it out with your own draft. Write a paragraph reflecting on the process. What surprised you? What did you learn through this process? In what ways was it helpful, and in what ways was it not? Will you use it again?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. For more about the relationships between revision, writing experience, and writing processes, see Alice Horning and Anne Becker's *Revision: History, Theory, and Practice* (Parlor Press) and Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* (Utah State University Press), specifically Doug Downs's chapter, "Revision Is Central to Developing Writing."

2. Just a handful of many important studies that have helped writing scholars better understand what's going on when writers revise are Nancy Sommers's "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Writers"; Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte's "Analyzing Revision"; Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* (Oxford University Press); and Paul Anderson, Chris Anson, Charles Paine, and Robert M. Gonyea's "The Contributions of Writing to Learning and Development: Results from a Large-Scale Multi-Institutional Study."

3. For more on how to frame revision and feedback for student writers, see Donald Murray's *A Writer Teaches Writing* (Wadsworth), Nancy Sommers's *Responding to Student Writers* (Macmillan Learning), and the video "Across the Drafts: Students and Teachers Talk about Feedback."

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CHAPTER 16.

CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES FOR REVISION

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES FOR REVISION

Let's start with a few definitions. What is an *essay?* It's likely that your teachers have been asking you to write essays for years now; you've probably formed some idea of the genre. But when I ask my students to define this kind of writing, their answers vary widely and only get at part of the meaning of "essay."

Although we typically talk of *an* essay (noun), I find it instructive to think about essay (verb): to try, to test, to explore, to attempt to understand. An essay (noun), then, is an attempt and an exploration. Popularized shortly before the Enlightenment era by Michel de Montaigne, the essay form was invested in the notion that writing invites discovery: the idea was that he, as a layperson without formal education in a specific discipline, would learn more about a subject through the act of writing itself.

What difference does this new definition make for us as writers?

1. Writing invites discovery.

Throughout the act of writing, you will learn more about your topic. Even though some people think of writing as a way to capture a fully formed idea, writing can also be a way to process ideas—in other words, writing can be an act of thinking. It forces you to look closer and see more. Your revisions should reflect the knowledge you gain through the act of writing.

2. An essay is an attempt, but not all attempts are successful on the first try.

You should give yourself license to fail, to an extent. If to essay is to try, then it's OK to fall short. Writing is also an iterative process, which means your first draft isn't the final product.

Now, what is *revision?* You may have been taught that revision means fixing commas, using a thesaurus to brighten up word choice, and maybe tweaking a sentence or two. However, I prefer to think of revision as "re | vision."

Revision isn't just about polishing—it's about seeing your piece from a new angle, with "fresh eyes." Often, we get so close to our own writing that we need to be able to see it from a different perspective in order to improve it. Revision happens on many levels. What you may have been trained to think of as revision—grammatical and mechanical fixes—is just one tier. Here's how I like to imagine it:

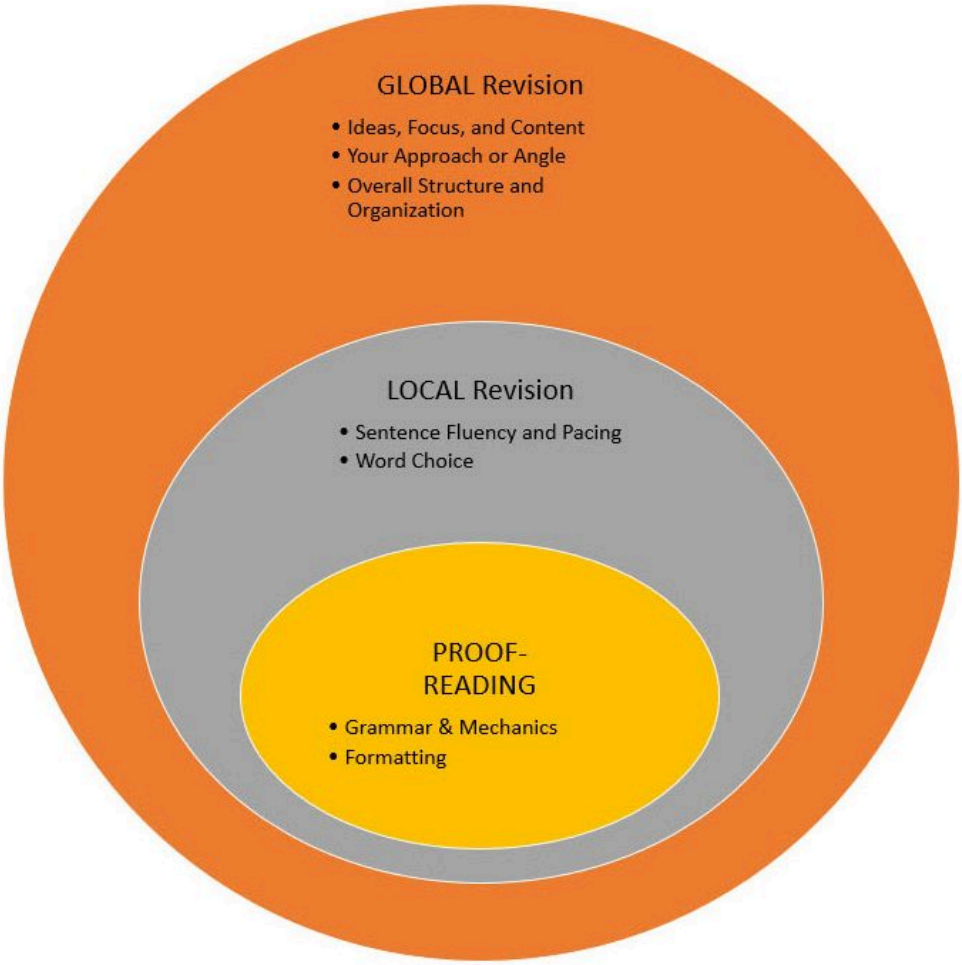

Fig 16.1 Global revision, local revision, and proofreading

Even though all kinds of revision are valuable, your global issues are first-order concerns, and proofreading is a last-order concern. If your entire topic, approach, or structure needs revision, it doesn't matter if you have a comma splice or two. It's likely that you'll end up rewriting that sentence anyway.

There are a handful of techniques you can experiment with in order to practice true revision. First, if you can, take some time away from your writing. When you return, you will have a clearer head. You will even, in some ways, be a different person when you come back—since we as humans are constantly changing from moment to moment, day to day, you will have a different perspective with some time away. This might be one way for you to make procrastination work in your favor: if you know you struggle with procrastination, try to bust out a quick first draft the day an essay is assigned. Then you can come back to it a few hours or a few days later with fresh eyes and a clearer idea of your goals.

Second, you can challenge yourself to reimagine your writing using global and local revision techniques, like those included later in this chapter.

Third, you can (and should) read your paper aloud, if only to yourself. This technique distances you from your writing; by forcing yourself to read aloud, you may catch sticky spots, mechanical errors, abrupt transitions, and other mistakes you would miss if you were immersed in your writing. (Recently, a student shared with me that she uses an online text-to-speech voice reader to create this same separation. By listening along and taking notes, she can identify opportunities for local- and proofreading-level revision.)

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should rely on your *learning* community. Because you most likely work on tight deadlines and don't always have the opportunity to take time away from our projects, you should solicit feedback from your classmates, the writing center, your instructor, your peer workshop group, or your friends and family. As readers, they have valuable insight into the rhetorical efficacy of your writing: their feedback can be useful in developing a piece that is conscious of audience. To begin setting expectations and procedures for your peer workshop, turn to the first activity in this section.

Throughout this text, I have emphasized that good writing cannot exist in a vacuum; similarly, good rewriting often requires a supportive learning community. Even if you have had negative experiences with peer workshops before, I encourage you to give them another chance. Not only do professional writers consistently work with other writers, but my students are nearly always surprised by just how helpful it is to work alongside their classmates.

The previous diagram (of global, local, and proofreading levels of revision) reminds us that everyone has something valuable to offer in a learning community: because there are so many different elements on which to articulate feedback, you can provide meaningful feedback to your workshop, even if you don't feel like an expert writer.

During the many iterations of revising, remember to be flexible and to listen. Seeing your writing with fresh eyes requires you to step outside of yourself, figuratively.

Listen actively and seek to truly understand feedback by asking clarifying questions and asking for examples. The reactions of your audience are a part of writing that you cannot overlook, so revision ought to be driven by the responses of your colleagues.

On the other hand, remember that the ultimate choice to use or disregard feedback is at the author's discretion: provide all the suggestions you want as a group member, but use your best judgment as an author. If members of your group disagree—great! Contradictory feedback reminds us that writing is a dynamic, transactional action that is dependent on the specific rhetorical audience.

Chapter Vocabulary

Table 16.1 Definitions of terms used in the following chapter

Vocabulary	Definition
Essay	A medium, typically nonfiction, by which an author can achieve a variety of purposes. Popularized by Michel de Montaigne as a method of discovery of knowledge: in the original French, *essay* is a verb that means "to try, to test, to explore, to attempt to understand."
Fluff	Uneconomical writing: filler language or unnecessarily wordy phrasing. Although fluff occurs in a variety of ways, it can be generally defined as words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that do not work hard to help you achieve your rhetorical purpose.
Iterative	Literally a repetition within a process. The writing process is iterative because it is nonlinear and because an author often has to repeat, revisit, or reapproach different steps along the way.
Learning community	A network of learners and teachers, each equipped and empowered to provide support through horizontal power relations. Values diversity insofar as it encourages growth and perspective but also inclusivity. Also, a community that learns by adapting to its unique needs and advantages.
Revision	The iterative process of changing a piece of writing. Literally revision: seeing your writing with "fresh eyes" in order to improve it. Includes changes on global, local, and proofreading levels. Changes might include the following: ✒ Rewriting (trying again, perhaps from a different angle or with a different focus) ✒ Adding (new information, new ideas, new evidence) ✒ Subtracting (unrelated ideas, redundant information, fluff) ✒ Rearranging (finding more effective vectors or sequences of organization) ✒ Switching out (changing words or phrases, substituting different evidence) ✒ Mechanical cleanup (standardizing punctuation, grammar, or formatting)

REVISION ACTIVITIES

Establishing Your Peer Workshop

Before you begin working with a group, it's important for you to establish a set of shared goals, expectations, and processes. You might spend a few minutes talking through the following questions:

- ✒ Have you ever participated in a peer workshop before? What worked? What didn't?
- ✒ What do you hate about group projects? How might you mitigate these issues?
- ✒ What opportunities do group projects offer that working independently doesn't? What are you excited about?
- ✒ What requests do you have for your peer workshop group members?

In addition to thinking through the culture you want to create for your workshop group, you should also consider the kind of feedback you want to exchange, practically speaking. In order to arrive at a shared definition for "good feedback," I often ask my students to complete the following sentence as many times as possible with their groupmates: "Good feedback is…"

The list could go on forever, but here are a few that I emphasize:

Table 16.2 A set of qualities that describe good feedback

"Good feedback is…"		
Kind	Actionable	Not prescriptive (offers suggestions, not demands)
Cognizant of process (i.e., recognizes that a first draft isn't a final draft)	Respectful	Honest
Specific	Comprehensive (i.e., global, local, and proofreading)	Attentive

Once you've discussed the parameters for the learning community you're building, you can begin workshopping your drafts, asking, "What does the author do well and what could they do better?" Personally, I prefer a workshop that's conversational, allowing the author and the audience to discuss the work both generally and specifically; however, your group should use whatever format will be most valuable for you. Before starting your workshop, try to get everyone on the same page logistically by using the following flowcharts.

To set the tone and expectations for your unique workshop group, talk through the following prompts. Record your answers. The first activity will establish a climate or culture for your group; the second will help you talk through logistics.

Choose the 3-5 descriptors of good feedback that are most important to the members of your group. Discuss for 3-5 minutes: What do each of you need for this Peer Workshop to be effective? **From each other? From the instructor? From yourselves? From your environment?** Record responses on a separate sheet of paper.

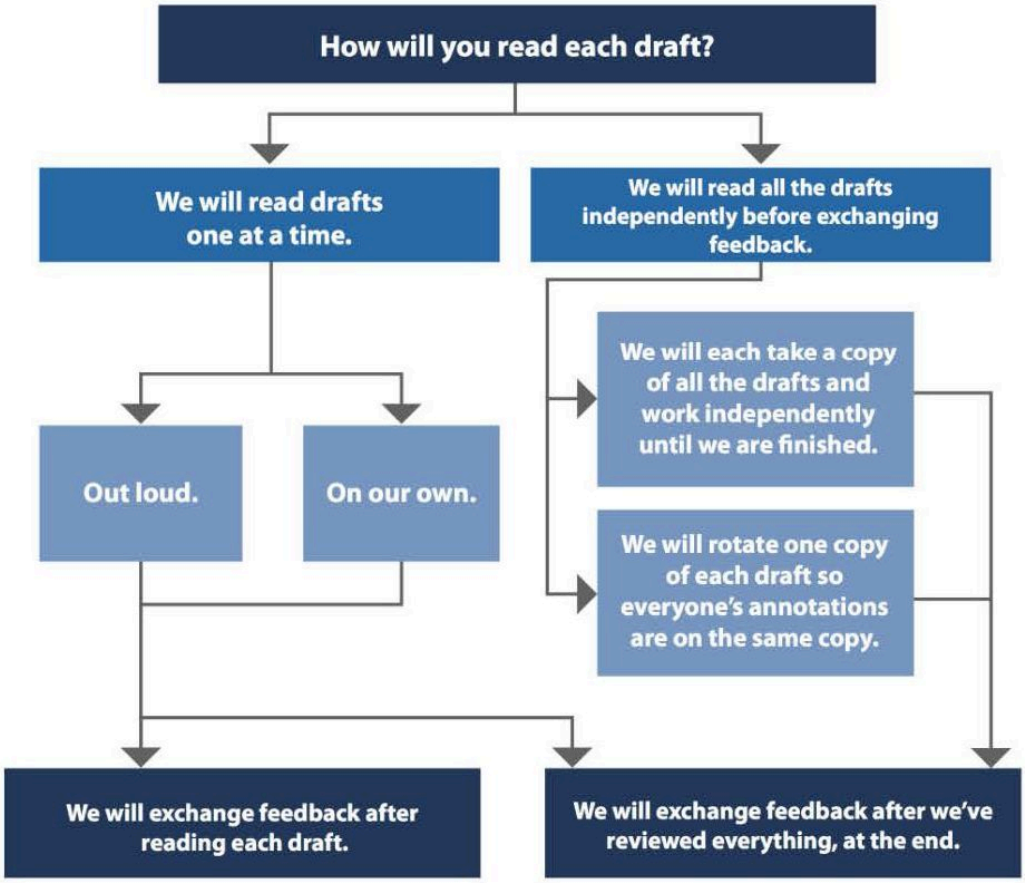

Fig 16.2 Establishing your peer workshop

Fig 16.3 How will your group develop feedback?

Global Revision Activity For A Narrative Essay

This assignment challenges you to try new approaches to a draft you've already written. Although you will be "rewriting" in this exercise, you are not abandoning your earlier draft: this exercise is generative, meaning it is designed to help you produce new details, ideas, or surprising bits of language that you might integrate into your project.

First, choose a part of your draft that (1) you really like but think could be better or (2) just isn't working for you. This excerpt should be no fewer than one hundred words and can include your entire essay, if you want.

Then complete your choice of one prompt from the list below: apply the instruction to the excerpt to create new content. *Read over your original once, but do not refer back to it after you start writing. Your goal here is to deviate from the first version, not reproduce it.* The idea here is to produce something new about your topic through constraint; you are reimagining your excerpt on a global scale.

After completing one prompt, go back to the original and try at least one more or apply a different prompt to your new work.

1. *Change genres.* For example, if your excerpt is written in typical essay form, try writing it as poetry, or dialogue from a play/movie, or a radio advertisement.

2. *Zoom in.* Focus on one image, color, idea, or word from your excerpt and zoom way in. Meditate on this one thing with as much detail as possible.

3. *Zoom out.* Step back from the excerpt and contextualize it with background information, concurrent events, or information about relationships or feelings.

4. *Change point of view.* Try a new vantage point for your story by changing pronouns and perspective. For instance, if your excerpt is in first person (I/me), switch to second (you) or third person (he/she/they).

5. *Change setting.* Resituate your excerpt in a different place or time.

6. *Change your audience.* Rewrite the excerpt anticipating the expectations of a different reader than you first intended. For example, if the original excerpt is in the same speaking voice you would use with your friends, write as if your strictest teacher or the president or your grandmother is reading it. If you've written in an "academic" voice, try writing for your closest friend—use slang, swear words, casual language, whatever.

7. *Add another voice.* Instead of just the speaker of the essay narrating, add a listener. This listener can agree, disagree, question, heckle, sympathize, apologize, or respond in any other way you can imagine.

8. *Change timeline (narrative sequence).* Instead of moving chronologically forward, rearrange the events to bounce around.

9. *Change tense.* Narrate from a different vantage point by changing the grammar. For example, instead of writing in past tense, write in present or future tense.

10. *Change tone.* Reimagine your writing in a different emotional register. For instance, if your writing is predominantly nostalgic, try a bitter tone. If you seem regretful, try to write as if you were proud.

Reverse Outlining

Have you ever written an outline before writing a draft? It can be a useful prewriting strategy, but it doesn't work for all writers. If you're like me, you prefer to brain-dump a bunch of ideas on the paper, then come back to organize and refocus during the revision process. One strategy that can help you here is *reverse* outlining.

Divide a blank piece of paper into three columns, as demonstrated below. Number each paragraph of your draft, and write an equal numbered list down the left column of your blank piece of paper. Write "Idea" at the top of the middle column and "Purpose" at the top of the right column.

Table 16.3 A worksheet example for reverse formatting

Paragraph Number (¶#)	Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)	Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)
Paragraph 1	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 2	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 3	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 4	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 5	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 6	Notes:	Notes:
Paragraph 7	Notes:	Notes:

Now wade back through your essay, identifying what each paragraph is *saying* and what each paragraph is *doing.* Choose a few key words or phrases for each column to record on your sheet of paper.

- Try to use consistent language throughout the reverse outline so you can see where your paragraphs are saying or doing similar things.
- A paragraph might have too many different ideas or too many different functions for you to concisely identify. This could be a sign that you need to divide that paragraph up.

Here's a student's model reverse outline:

Table 16.4 A model of a reverse outline

Paragraph Number (¶)	Idea (What is the ¶ saying?)	Purpose (What is the ¶ doing?)
Paragraph 1	Theater is an important part of education and childhood development.	Setting up and providing thesis statement
Paragraph 2	There have been many changes in recent history to public education in the United States.	Providing context for thesis
Paragraph 3	Theater programs in public schools have been on the decline over the past two decades.	Providing context and giving urgency to the topic
Paragraph 4	a. Theater has social/emotional benefits. b. Theater has academic benefits.	Supporting and explaining thesis
Paragraph 5	a. Acknowledge argument in favor of standardized testing. b. STEAM curriculum incorporates arts education into other academic subjects.	Disarming audience, proposing a solution to underfunded arts programs
Paragraph 6	Socioeconomic inequality is also an obstacle to theater education.	Acknowledging broader scope of topic
Paragraph 7	Looking forward at public education reform, we should incorporate theater into public education.	Call to action, backing up and restating thesis

But wait—there's more!

Once you have identified the idea(s) and purpose(s) of each paragraph, you can start revising according to your observations. From the completed reverse outline, create a new outline with a different sequence, organization, focus, or balance. You can reorganize by

- combining or dividing paragraphs,
- rearranging ideas, and
- adding or subtracting content.

Reverse outlining can also be helpful in identifying gaps and redundancies: Now that you have a new outline, do any of your ideas seem too brief? Do you need more evidence for a certain argument? Do you see ideas repeated more than necessary?

After completing the reverse outline above, the student proposed this new organization:

16.5 Student proposed changes based on previous table

Proposed changes based on reverse outline:
1
4a
4b
Combine 2 and 5a
Combine 3 and 6
5b
Write new paragraph on other solutions
7

You might note that this strategy can also be applied on the sentence and section level. Additionally, if you are a kinesthetic or visual learner, you might cut your paper into smaller pieces that you can physically manipulate.

Be sure to read aloud after reverse outlining to look for abrupt transitions.

You can see a simplified version of this technique demonstrated in this video.

Local Revision Activity: Cutting Fluff

When it's late at night, the deadline is approaching, and we've simply run out of things to say…we turn to fluff. Fluff refers to language that doesn't do work for you—language that simply takes up space or sits flat on the page rather than working economically and impactfully. Whether or not you've used it deliberately, all authors have been guilty of fluffy writing at one time or another.

Example of fluff on social media ["Presidents don't have to be smart" from funnyjunk.com].

Fluff happens for a lot of reasons.

- Of course, reaching a word or page count is the most common motivation.
- Introductions and conclusions are often fluffy because the author can't find a way into or out of the subject or because the author doesn't know what their exact subject will be.
- Sometimes, the presence of fluff is an indication that the author doesn't know enough about the subject or that their scope is too broad.
- Other times, fluffy language is deployed in an effort to sound "smarter" or "fancier" or "more academic"—which is an understandable pitfall for developing writers.

These circumstances, plus others, encourage us to use language that's not as effective, authentic, or economical. Fluff happens in a lot of ways; here are a few I've noticed:

Table 16.6 A list of common fluff origin stories

Fluff's Supervillainous Alter-Ego	Supervillain Origin Story
Thesaurus syndrome	A writer uses inappropriately complex language (often because of the right-click "Synonyms" function) to achieve a different tone. The more complex language might be used inaccurately or sound inauthentic because the author isn't as familiar with it.
Roundabout phrasing	Rather than making a direct statement ("That man is a fool."), the author uses couching language or beats around the bush ("If one takes into account each event, each decision, it would not be unwise for one to suggest that that man's behaviors are what some would call foolish.")
Abstraction or generalities	If the author hasn't quite figured out what they want to say or has too broad of a scope, they might discuss an issue very generally without committing to specific, engaging details.
Digression	An author might get off topic, accidentally or deliberately, creating extraneous, irrelevant, or unconnected language.
Ornamentation or flowery language	Similarly to thesaurus syndrome, often referred to as "purple prose," an author might choose words that sound pretty or smart but aren't necessarily the right words for their ideas.
Wordy sentences	Even if the sentences an author creates are grammatically correct, they might be wordier than necessary.

Of course, there's a very fine line between *detail* and *fluff.* Avoiding fluff doesn't mean always using the fewest words possible. Instead, you should occasionally ask yourself in the revision process, *How is this part contributing to the whole?* Is this somehow building toward a bigger purpose? If the answer is no, then you need to revise.

The goal should not necessarily be "Don't write fluff" but rather "Learn to get rid of fluff in revision." In light of our focus on process, you are allowed to write fluff in the drafting period, so long as you learn to "prune" during revisions. (I use the word prune as an analogy for caring for a plant: just as you must cut the dead leaves off for the plant's health and growth, you will need to cut fluff so your writing can thrive.)

Here are a few strategies:

- Read out loud.
- Ask yourself what a sentence is *doing,* rhetorically.
- Combine like sentences, phrases, or ideas.
- Use signposts, like topic-transition sentences (for yourself during revision and for your reader in the final draft).
- Be specific—stay cognizant of your scope (globally) and the detail of your writing (locally).

To practice revising for fluff, workshop the following excerpt by yourself or with a partner. Your goal is not to cut back to the smallest number of words but rather to prune out what you consider to be fluff and leave what you consider to be detail. You should be able to explain the choices you make.

> There was a time long before today when an event occurred involving a young woman who was known to the world as Goldilocks. On the particular day at hand, Goldilocks made a spontaneous decision to wander through the forest, the trees growing up high above her flowing blonde pigtails. Some time after she commenced her voyage, but not after too long, she saw sitting on the horizon a small residency. Goldilocks rapped her knuckles on the door, but alas, no one answered the door. Therefore, Goldilocks decided that it would be a good idea to enter the unattended house, so she entered it. Atop the average-sized table in the kitchen of the house, there were three bowls of porridge, which is similar to oatmeal. Porridge is a very common dish in Europe; in fact, the Queen of England is well known for enjoying at least one daily bowl of porridge per day. Goldilocks, not unlike the Queen of England, enjoys eating porridge for its nutritional value. On this day, she was feeling quite hungry and wanted to eat. She decided that she should taste one of the three bowls of porridge, from which steam was rising indicating its temperature. But because she apparently couldn't tell, she imbibed a spoonful of the porridge and vocalized the fact that the porridge was of too high a temperature for her to masticate and consume: "This porridge is too hot!"

The original chapter, Concepts and Strategies for Revision by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

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PART IV.

WORKING WITH SOURCES

CHAPTER 17.

THE BURKEAN PARLOR METAPHOR

KENNETH BURKE; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

The Burkean Parlor metaphor is from *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This metaphor imagines writing as a social act—a conversation rather than a monologue. How does this align with or differ from how you have thought about writing in the past?
2. Why does the social nature of writing matter?
3. How can you catch "the tenor of the argument"? In other words, how do you come to understand a cultural conversation?
4. The parlor metaphor asks you to "put in your oar," but this can feel difficult when you are joining a conversation that has gone on long before you. How can writers build confidence in this regard?

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CHAPTER 18.

RESEARCH SHOULD START WITH QUESTIONS, NOT ANSWERS

EMILY A. WIERSZEWSKI; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Our collective belief in the importance of definite answers impacts many areas of our lives, including how we understand the process and purpose of research. Specifically, it leads to a *thesis-first* research model in which research is only used to verify our existing ideas or theses. In this model, there is no room for doubt or ambiguity. We assume we need to know the answers to our problems or questions before the process gets underway before we consult and evaluate what others have said.

Research can be productively used in this way to verify assumptions and arguments. Sometimes what we need is just a little support for an idea, a confirmation of the best approach to a problem, or the answer to simple questions. For example, we might believe the new iPhone is the best smartphone on the market and use research on the phone's specs to prove we're right. This kind of thesis-first approach to research becomes harmful, however, when we assume that it is *the only* or t*he most valuable way* to conduct research.

Evidence of this widespread assumption is easy to find. A simple search for the research process on Google will yield multiple hits hosted by academic institutions that suggest a researcher needs a thesis early in the research process. For instance, the University of Maryland University College's *Online Guide to Writing and Research* suggests that a thesis should be developed as soon as source collection gets underway, though that thesis may change over time. This strategy is endorsed by multiple research library websites, such as the University of Minnesota.

And yet genuine inquiry—the kind of research that often leads to new ideas and important choices—tends to begin with unsettled problems and questions rather than with thesis statements and predetermined answers. Wernher von Braun, an engineer whose inventions advanced the US space program in the mid-twenty-first century, famously describes research as "What I'm doing when I don't know what I'm doing" (qtd. in Pfeiffer 238).

The understanding of research as discovery is echoed in the recent "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," a document authored by the Association of College and Research Librarians (ACRL). They write that research often begins with open-ended questions that are "based on information gaps or reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting,

information" (7). In other words, research isn't just for backing up our hunches. It can, and should, also be used as a method of investigating areas of uncertainty, curiosity, conflict, and multiple perspectives.

As the ACRL's framework also emphasizes, when researchers review published source material around their topic, points of disagreement will be discovered; these points are expected as scholars propose ideas to address complicated issues. When we are open to selecting and engaging with these multiple published perspectives in our research, we're also forced to consider how they extend or challenge our beliefs and ideas about a topic. Considering all sides, we can then make a more informed decision about our questions or topics.

Another potential harm of the thesis-first model of research is the attendant assumption that the research process is linear. In a thesis-guided research process, a question is posed, an answer is generated, and sources are found that match up with that answer. Truthfully, research rarely progresses on an uncluttered path toward a clear solution. Instead, research is a recursive process that involves many diversions, bumps, and missteps.

Research is sometimes described as *cyclical* and *fluid.* As we research, we may find ourselves returning to and changing our question, or we may near the end of a project and think we're done but discover we need to go back to find more or better sources. The messiness of research requires us to be flexible, often modifying our approaches along the way. When we enter the research process with a narrow and rigid focus on our thesis, we can become discouraged and inclined to abandon our ideas when the research process does not unfold neatly.

In place of a thesis-first model, we would be better served to begin research with a question or a statement of a problem. We should conduct research not just to back up our preexisting assumptions and prove we're right about something but also when we feel curious or confused and do not have answers. *Why is something the way it is? Why doesn't the data quite add up? How could something be changed for the better?*

When we understand research as a process of discovery rather than a process of proof, we open ourselves up to be changed by our research—to better our lives, our decisions, and our world. We acknowledge that we do not have the only or the best answer to every question and that we might learn something from considering the ideas of others. While research definitely has the power to impact our lives and beliefs, research doesn't always have to be life altering. But in a thesis-first model where our only goal is just to prove we're right, there is no possibility of being changed by our research.

Here's a practical example of the difference. Just imagine the results of a research process beginning with a thesis like "Human trafficking should have harsher legal penalties" versus one that starts with an open-ended question like "Why does human trafficking persist in the democratic nation of the United States?" In the thesis-first model, a researcher would likely only encounter sources that argue for their preexisting belief: that harsher penalties are needed. They would probably never be exposed to multiple perspectives on this complex issue, and the result would just be confirmation of their earlier beliefs.

However, a researcher who begins with an open-ended question motivated by curiosity, whose goal is not to *prove* anything but to discover salient ideas about a human rights issue, has the

chance to explore different thoughts about human trafficking and come to her own conclusions as she researches why it's a problem and what ought to be done to stop it, not just create stronger consequences for it.

Viewing research as a process of discovery allows us to accept that not every question is answerable and that questions sometimes lead only to more questions. For instance, the researcher in the previous paragraph exploring the issue of human trafficking might find that there is no clear, single explanation for the prevalence of this human rights violation and that she's interested to know more about the role of immigration laws and human trafficking—something she never even thought of before she did her research.

When researchers do discover answers, they may find those answers are fluid and debatable. What we have at any time is only a consensus between informed parties, and at any time, new research or insights can cause that agreement to shift. As we read in chapter 17, the philosopher and literary critic Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) explains the constructed nature of knowledge as an *unending conversation*. According to Burke, the moment in which a researcher reads and participates in scholarship around the research topic or problem is just a speck on a continuum of conversation that has been ongoing well before the researcher thought of the question and will continue long after the researcher has walked away from it. As Burke writes, "The discussion is interminable" (110).

So how can we move toward embracing uncertainty? In his book *A More Beautiful Question*, Warren Berger suggests that parents and those who work with young children can foster curiosity by welcoming questions. Parents also need to learn to be comfortable with saying "I don't know" in response rather than searching for a simple answer. Berger also recommends that as children go through school, parents and educators can work together to support children's questioning nature rather than always privileging definite answers. When students graduate and move into the working world, employers can encourage them to ask questions about policies, practices, and workplace content; employees should be given the freedom to explore those questions with research, which can potentially lead to more sustainable and current policies, practices, and content. The same goes for civic and community life, where any form of questioning or inquiry is often misconstrued as a challenge to authority. To value questions more than answers in our personal and professional lives requires a cultural shift.

Although our culture would tell us that we have to know everything and that we should even begin a research project by knowing the answer to our question, there is obvious value in using research as a tool to engage our curiosity and sense of wonder as human beings—perhaps even to improve our lives or the lives of others. If all researchers started the process with preconceived answers, no new findings would ever come to be. In order to truly learn about a topic or issue, especially when it involves important decision-making, we need to learn to embrace uncertainty and feel comfortable knowing we might not always have an answer when we begin a research project.

The original chapter, Research Starts with a Thesis Statement by Emily A. Wierszewski, is from Bad Ideas about Writing

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe your typical research process for previous classes or papers. Was this thesis-first or inquiry-based research? What were the benefits or drawbacks of this approach? What led you to that method?
2. Imagine you had all the time in the world to research a topic that you were personally passionate about. How might your approach to research be different than in a class?
3. What does Werner von Braun mean when he says that research is "what I'm doing when I don't know what I'm doing"? Have you experienced this version of research, either in writing a paper or in another context?

ACTIVITIES

1. Go down a "rabbit hole" with your research. Use your curiosity to guide you in this inquiry-based research activity.
2. Start at a Wikipedia page related to your topic. (If you don't have a topic, try "organic farming," "Israel," "CRISPR," "American Sign Language," or something else.)
3. Read the page, but follow your interest, and click through to other pages as you go. Spend ten to fifteen minutes following your interest from one topic to the next. Sometimes you might backtrack or search other terms—that's OK too.
4. Reflect on the process. Where did you start? Where did you end up? How did you feel as you were reading, and how did it compare with your typical research experience for a class project? What did this process suggest about inquiry-based learning?
5. Individually or as a class, brainstorm potential research questions for a topic of your choice. Discuss the range of options you came up with. How did this approach lead you in new directions?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- For additional information about the power and purpose of inquiry in our everyday lives, consult Warren Berger's book *A More Beautiful Question* (Bloomsbury), which provides an overview of how to engage in authentic inquiry in a variety of settings. Berger offers practical advice for learning to develop research questions that are driven by discovery and innovation. Robert Davis and Mark Shadle also provide a defense of inquiry in their article "'Building a Mystery': Alternative Research Writing and the Academic Art of Seeking" (*College Composition and Communication*).

- For more specific information about all of the stages of the research process, including formulating a question, Bruce Ballenger's classic guide to research, *The Curious Researcher* (Longman), and Ken Macrorie's canonical text *I Search* (Boynton/Cook), which focuses on research with personal value, may be useful. Clark College Libraries' website also provides a quick reference chart outlining the research process entitled "The Research Process Daisy."

- Wendy Bishop and Pavel Zemliansky's edited collection, *The Subject Is Research: Processes and Practices* (Boynton/Cook), provides perspectives from multiple authors about various research techniques such as interviewing and observation that can be used to engage in the inquiry process.

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CHAPTER 19.

FINDING A RESEARCH QUESTION

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

We live in an age of immediate answers. Although we have not achieved parity in access to technology worldwide, information has never been easier to uncover. This is, of course, a double-edged sword: the proliferation of ideas due to the technological revolution enables new kinds of learning but also has fundamentally changed the way we think and interact.

One of my friends refers to his iPhone as the "Wonder Killer": because he has such quick access to answers through the miniature computer he carries everywhere, the experience of sustained curiosity is now very rare in his life. All kinds of questions are easily answered by googling "Who was that guy in *Back to the Future Part II*?" or "Do spiders hibernate?" or by taking a brief crawl through Wikipedia: "How has globalization impacted Bhutan's economy?" "What life experiences influenced Frida Kahlo's painting?" But the answers to these questions, though easily discovered, paint a very one-dimensional portrait of human knowledge.

For scientists and writers alike, the spirit of curiosity motivates at once individual learning and also the growth and progress of our collective knowledge. Your innate ability to be curious puts you in the league of the most brilliant and prolific scholars—people who were driven by questions, seeking to interrogate the world around them.

In this section, I add my voice to the chorus of writing teachers whose rallying cry is a renewed investment in curiosity. Hopefully, you too will embrace inquisitive fascination by rejecting easy answers and using writing as a means of discovery.

INQUIRY-BASED RESEARCH

It's possible that you've already written research papers by this point in your academic career. If your experience has been like mine, writing these papers went one of two ways:

1. The teacher assigns a specific topic for you to research, and sometimes even a specific thesis for you to prove.

2. The teacher provides more freedom, allowing students to choose a topic at their own discretion or from a set of options.

In both situations, my teacher expected me to figure out what I wanted to argue, then find research to back me up. I was expected to have a fully formed stance on an issue, then use my sources to explain and support that stance. Not until graduate school did I encounter inquiry-based research, which inverts this sequence.

Put simply, inquiry-based research refers to research and research writing that is motivated by curiosity rather than a teacher's requirement.

A Comparison of Research Styles

Table 19.1 A chart comparing inquiry and non-inquiry-based research

Non-inquiry-based research	Inquiry-based research
Your research begins with an answer and seeks out evidence that confirms that answer.	Your research begins with a question, reviews all the evidence available, and then develops that answer.
For example, a murder occurs, and I get a bad vibe from the butler. I look for all the clues that confirm that the butler did it; assuming I find what I need, I can declare that the butler did it.	For example, a murder occurs. I look for as many clues as I can, then determine the most likely culprit based on that evidence.

It's quite possible that the butler did do it, and both logical processes might lead me to the same conclusion. However, an inquiry-based investigation allows more consideration for the possibility that the butler is innocent.

Consider the difference this can make: if research is about **learning**, then an inquiry-based perspective is essential. If you only seek out the ideas that agree with you, you will never learn.

Even in the event that the investigation yields the same answers, their differences are crucial. When we only look for answers that agree with our preexisting ideas, we are more likely to ignore other important ideas, voices, and possibilities. Most importantly, **confirmation bias** inhibits genuine learning, which relies on challenging, expanding, and complicating our current knowledge and world views.

Consequently, inquiry-based research is time-consuming and intensive: instead of only dealing with evidence that supports a certain answer or perspective, it requires the reasoner to encounter a great diversity of evidence and answers, which can be difficult to sift through.

This distinction has important implications for the kind of research and research writing for which this book advocates.

- You don't have to—shouldn't, in fact—have a thesis set in stone before starting your thesis, but you must be tremendously flexible: be prepared to pivot, qualify, nuance, or entirely change your answer as you proceed.
- In order to pursue your research question, you will need to encounter *a lot* of sources. Not all of the sources you encounter will make it into your paper, which is a new practice for some students. This is a time-consuming process, but it leads to more significant learning, more complex thinking, and more interesting and effective rhetoric.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION

Finding a conversation that you're excited about and genuinely interested in is the first and most important step. As you develop a topic, keep in mind that pursuing your curiosities and passions will make your research process less arduous, more relevant, and more pleasant. Such an approach will also naturally improve the quality of your writing: the interest you have for a topic will come across in the construction of your sentences and your willingness to pursue multiple lines of thought about a topic. An author's boredom results in a boring paper, and an author's enthusiasm translates to enthusiastic writing.

Depending on the parameters your teacher has set, your research topic might need to (1) present a specific viewpoint, (2) focus on a specific topic, or (3) focus on a certain theme or set of ideas. It's also possible that your teacher will allow complete autonomy for one or all of your research assignments. Be sure you review any materials your instructor provides and ask clarifying questions to make sure your topic fits the guidelines of their assignment.

To generate ideas, identify areas of interest, then develop questions of all sizes and types. Eventually, you will zero in on a question or combination of questions as your path of inquiry.

What makes for a good research question or path of inquiry? Of course, the answer to this question will depend on your rhetorical situation. However, there are some common characteristics of a good research question in any situation:

1. It is answerable but not easily answerable.

Engaging and fruitful research questions require complex, informed answers. However, they shouldn't be so subjective, intricate, or expansive that they simply cannot be answered in the scope of your rhetorical situation.

2. It is specific.

By establishing parameters on your scope, you can be sure your research is directed and relevant.

3. It matters to someone.

Research questions and the rhetoric they inform are valuable only because they have stakes: even if it's a small demographic, the answers to your research question should impact someone.

4. It allows you to say something new or unique.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, inquiry-based research should encourage you to articulate a unique standpoint by synthesizing many different voices, interpreted from your individual perspective, with your life experiences and ideas. What you say doesn't have to be groundbreaking, but it shouldn't just reiterate ideas, arguments, histories, or perspectives.

It is difficult to find a question that hits all these marks on your first try. As you proceed through research, prewriting, drafting, and revising, you should refine and adjust your question(s). Just like any other part of writing, developing a path of inquiry is iterative: you've got to take a lot of chances and work your way toward different results.

WORKING QUESTIONS

In order to find the best version of your research question, you should develop "working questions"—questions of all sizes and types that are pertinent to your subject. As you can see below, you can start with a handful of simple working questions that will eventually lead to a viable research question.

Revising Simple Questions into Research Questions

Table 19.2 Chart showing the steps of revising a research question from working question to research question

Beginning interest	Working question	Working research question	Revised research question
Vietnamese food and culture	What do people eat in Vietnam? *Too easy to answer; low stakes; not specific enough*	What does Vietnamese food reflect about Vietnamese culture? *Higher stakes, more specific*	How does Vietnamese cuisine reflect a history of colonialism? *More complex answers, higher stakes, very specific*
Health	Are people in the United States more obese than they used to be? *Too straightforward, not specific enough*	Have obesity rates increased in the United States over the last one hundred years? *More specific*	Is there a correlation between obesity rates and economic instability in the United States over the last one hundred years? *More complex answers, higher stakes, very specific*
World religion	What is the role of religion in the Middle East? *Not specific enough, difficult to answer in depth*	How has religion influenced politics in the Middle East in the last fifty years? *More specific, easier to answer*	How has religion's influence on government impacted the day-to-day lives of Qatari citizens? *Very specific, higher stakes, more complex answers*

As you hone your path of inquiry, you may need to zoom in or out in terms of scope: depending on your rhetorical situation, you will need different degrees of focus. Just like narration, research writing benefits from a careful consideration of scope. Often, a narrower scope is easier to work with than a broader scope—you will be able to write more and write better if your question asks for more complex thinking.

It's important to be flexible throughout your research project. Be prepared to pivot topics, adjust your research question, change your opinions, and confront unanticipated challenges.

As you build a working knowledge of your topic, you might complicate or narrow your working questions. Gradually, try to articulate a research question (or combination of questions). Remember to be flexible as you research though: you might need to pivot, adjust, refocus, or replace your research question as you learn more.

Consider this imaginary case study as an example of this process:

> Ahmed began his project by identifying the following areas of interest: racism in the US, technology in medicine and health care, and independent filmmaking. After doing some freewriting and preliminary research on each, he decided he wanted to learn more about racially motivated police violence. He developed working questions:

- Are police officers likely to make judgments about citizens based on their race?
- Have police forces instituted policies to avoid racism?
- Who is most vulnerable to police violence?
- Why does it seem like police officers target people of color? Who is responsible for overseeing the police?

He realized that he needed to narrow his focus to develop a more viable path of inquiry, eventually ending up with the following research question:

- Over the last thirty years, what populations are most likely to experience police violence in the US?

However, after completing more research, Ahmed discovered that his answers came pretty readily: young Black men are significantly more vulnerable to be victims of police violence. He realized that he was not really saying anything new, so he had to tweak his path of inquiry.

Ahmed did some more freewriting and dug around to find a source that disagreed with him or added a new layer to his answers. He discovered eventually that there are a handful of police organizations that have made genuine efforts to confront racism in their practices. Despite the widespread and normalized violence enacted against people of color, these groups were working against racial violence. He reoriented his research question to be the following:

- Have antiracist police trainings and strategies been effective in reducing individual or institutional racism over the last thirty years?

The original chapter, Research Concepts by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the last thing you were truly curious about? How did you find more information about it? What was the last thing that pulled you down an internet rabbit hole?

2. How would you adapt the following question so that it leads to further inquiry and analysis rather than the straightforward reporting of facts? "How can the average consumer reduce their carbon emissions?"

ACTIVITIES

1. Brainstorming. Create a catalog of topics you are personally curious about—things that you want to learn more about. These don't have to be revolutionary things right away; it's more important that they're meaningful to you.

    a. First, choose three of the following broad topic headings: politics, science and technology, food, sports, music and art, other cultures and nations, social justice, the environment and sustainability, health and disease, business and economy, education. On your first sheet of a three-column paper, write those three topic headings.

    b. Next, underneath each topic heading, write bulleted lists of as many subtopics or related ideas that come to mind that interest you. (Try not to censor yourself here—the idea is to generate a large number of bullet points. To some extent, this is an exercise in free association: What are the first things that come to mind when you think of each topic?) Spend ten to fifteen minutes on your lists.

    c. Read over your lists, making note especially of items that surprised you. Choose the three items from the full page that most interest you. You can choose one from each column, three from the same, or any combination of lists, so long as you have three items that you care about.

2. Idea generation: Internet stumbling. In addition to its status as an ever-expanding repository of knowledge and in addition to its contributions to global human connection, the internet is also an exceptional free-association machine. Through the magic of hyperlinks and social media, random chance can set us in the right direction to develop a research topic.

    Spend fifteen to twenty minutes clicking around on the internet, using one of the following media for guidance, and jot down every potential topic that piques your interest.

    a. Wikipedia: Go to the Wikipedia homepage and check out the "featured article" of the day, or choose "Random Article" from the sidebar on the far left. Click

any of the hyperlinks in the article to redirect to a different page. Bounce from article to article, keeping track of the titles of pages and sections that catch your eye.

b. An Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, or Twitter feed: Flow through one or more social media feeds, using links, geotags, user handles, and hashtags to encounter a variety of posts.

c. After stumbling, review the list you've made of potentially interesting topics. Are you already familiar with any of them? Which surprised you? Are there any relationships or intersections worth exploring further? From these topics and subtopics, try to articulate a viable and interesting research question that speaks to your curiosity.

3. Moving from topics to questions: Small group activity. Begin to develop working and research questions by collaborating with your classmates to explore different curiosities.

a. Divide your paper into three columns. Write three potential topics as headings, one in each column.

b. Sit in a circle with your groupmates; each student should pass their three-column paper one position clockwise. For five minutes, each student will freewrite questions about each topic. No question is too big or small, too simple or complex. Try to generate as many questions as you possibly can. Then rotate your papers another step—repeat until you have your original sheet of paper back.

c. Review the questions your groupmates compiled on your sheet. Have they offered anything that surprises you—issues you haven't thought of, relationships between questions, recurring themes or patterns of interest, or foci that might yield interesting answers?

4. Moving from topics to questions: Whole class gallery walk. Begin to develop working and research questions by collaborating with your classmates to explore different curiosities.

a. Write your three favorite topic ideas in the headings of a three-column paper. Every student should tape their papers to the classroom wall, just below eye level, so that it forms a circular shape around the perimeter of the room.

b. Each student in the class should stand in front of their paper, then rotate one position clockwise.

c. At each new page, you will have two minutes to review the headings and freewrite questions about each topic. No question is too big or small, too simple or complex. Try to generate as many questions as you possibly can. Then rotate through clockwise until you've returned to your original position.

d. Review the questions your classmates compiled on your sheet. Have they offered anything that surprises you—issues you haven't thought of, relationships between questions, recurring themes or patterns of interest, or foci that might yield interesting answers?

5. Focus and scope. At this point, you have hopefully identified some topic or path of inquiry for your research project. In order to experiment with scope, try complicating your research question(s) along the different dimensions in the following table. A completed table is included as an example after the blank one.

   ✒ Blank Worksheet

Table 19.3 A blank worksheet for scope experiments

Your current topic or research question(s):
Notes:

Scope dimension	More narrow	More broad
Time (When?)	Notes:	Notes:
Place (Where?)	Notes:	Notes:
Population (For whom?)	Notes:	Notes:
Connections (Intersections with other issues)	Notes:	Notes:
Other…(Topic-specific adjustments)	Notes:	Notes:

- Downloadable copy
- Model

Table 19.4 A model of the scope worksheet

Your current topic or research question(s):
Should marijuana be legalized nationally?

Scope dimension	More narrow	More broad
Time (When?)	**Notes:** What do trends in marijuana consumption in the last twenty years indicate about legislation?	**Notes:** How has marijuana been treated legally over the last one hundred years?
Place (Where?)	**Notes:** Should marijuana be legal in our state?	**Notes:** Should marijuana be legalized internationally?
Population (For whom?)	**Notes:** Should marijuana be legalized for medical users?	**Notes:** How does marijuana compare with legal pharmaceutical drugs?
Connections (Intersections with other issues)	**Notes:** Does marijuana legalization correlate to addiction, economy, or crime?	**Notes:** How does marijuana compare with legal pharmaceutical drugs?
Other…(Topic-specific adjustments)	**Notes:** Should marijuana sales be organized by the government?	**Notes:** Should all drugs be legalized nationally?

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CHAPTER 20.

FOUR TIERS OF SOURCES AND HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

AMY GUPTILL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

AH, THE RESEARCH PAPER

Such exhilaration! Such consternation! Educators are fond of research papers because they require you to find your own sources, confront conflicting evidence, and synthesize diverse information and ideas—all skills required in any professional leadership role. Research papers also allow students to pursue their own topic of interest; your professors have to assume that you are genuinely interested in at least some major part of the course. The open-endedness of research papers sets you up to do your best work as a self-motivated scholar.

This chapter is about secondary sources: what they are, where to find them, and how to choose them. For example, let's think about the distinction between primary and secondary sources. **Primary sources** are original documents, data, or images: the law code of the Le Dynasty in Vietnam, the letters of Kurt Vonnegut, data gathered from an experiment on color perception, an interview, or Farm Service Administration photographs from the 1930s. **Secondary sources** are produced by analyzing primary sources. They include news articles, scholarly articles, reviews of films or art exhibitions, documentary films, and other pieces that have some descriptive or analytical purpose. Some things may be primary sources in one context but secondary sources in another. For example, if you're using news articles to inform an analysis of a historical event, they're serving as secondary sources. If you're counting the number of times a particular newspaper reported on different types of events, then the news articles are serving as primary sources because they're more akin to raw data.

SOME SOURCES ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS

You've probably heard by now that if you cite Wikipedia as an authoritative source, the wrath of your instructor shall be visited upon you. Why is it that even the most informative Wikipedia articles are still often considered illegitimate? And what are good sources to use? The table below summarizes the types of secondary sources in four tiers. All sources have their legitimate uses, but the top-tier ones are preferable for citation in an academic context.

Table 20.1 Analyzing the quality of secondary sources

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	How to find them
Tier I	Peer-reviewed academic publications	Rigorous research and analysis	Provide strong evidence for claims and references to other high-quality sources	Google Scholar, library catalogs, and academic article databases
Tier II	Reports, articles, and books from credible nonacademic sources	Well-researched and even-handed descriptions of an event or state of the world	Initial research on events or trends not yet analyzed in the academic literature; may reference important Tier 1 sources	Websites of relevant agencies, Google searches using *.gov or *.org sites, academic article databases
Tier III	Short pieces from newspapers or credible websites	Simple reporting of events, research findings, or policy changes	Often point to useful Tier 2 or Tier 1 sources; may provide a factoid or two not found anywhere else	Strategic Google searches or article databases, including newspapers and magazines
Tier IV	Agenda-driven or uncertain pieces	Mostly opinion, varying in thoughtfulness and credibility	May represent a particular position within a debate; more often provide keywords and clues about higher-quality sources	Nonspecific Google searches

TIER 1

PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

These are sources from academic literature: books and scholarly articles. Academic books generally fall into three categories: (1) textbooks written with students in mind, (2) monographs (books) that give an extended report on a large research project, and (3) edited volumes in which each chapter is authored by different people. Scholarly articles appear in academic journals, which are published multiple times a year in order to share the latest research findings with scholars in the field. They're usually sponsored by some academic society. To get published, these articles and books had to earn favorable anonymous evaluations by qualified scholars. Who are the experts writing, reviewing, and editing these scholarly publications? Your professors. Learning how to read and use these sources is a fundamental part of being a college student.

TIER 2

REPORTS, ARTICLES, AND BOOKS FROM CREDIBLE NONACADEMIC SOURCES

Some events and trends are too recent to appear in Tier 1 sources. Also, Tier 1 sources tend to be highly specific, and sometimes you need a more general perspective on a topic. Thus, Tier 2 sources can provide quality information that is more accessible to nonacademics. There are three main categories:

1. These are official reports from government agencies or major international institutions like the World Bank or the United Nations; these institutions generally have research departments staffed with qualified experts who seek to provide rigorous, even-handed information to decision-makers.

2. Feature articles from major newspapers and magazines like the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *London Times*, or the *Economist* are based on original

reporting by experienced journalists (not press releases) and are typically fifteen hundred–plus words in length.

3. There are some great books from nonacademic presses that cite their sources; they're often written by journalists.

All three of these sources are generally well-researched descriptions of an event or state of the world, undertaken by credentialed experts who generally seek to be evenhanded. It is still up to you to judge their credibility. Your instructors and campus librarians can advise you on which sources in this category have the most credibility.

TIER 3

SHORT PIECES FROM PERIODICALS OR CREDIBLE WEBSITES

A step below the well-developed reports and feature articles that make up Tier 2 are the short tidbits that one finds in newspapers and magazines or credible websites. How short is a short news article? Usually, they're just a couple paragraphs or less, and they're often reporting on just one thing: an event, an interesting research finding, or a policy change. They don't take extensive research and analysis to write, and many just summarize a press release written and distributed by an organization or business. They may describe things like corporate mergers, newly discovered diet-health links, or important school-funding legislation.

You may want to cite Tier 3 sources in your paper if they provide an important factoid or two that isn't provided by a higher-tier piece, but if the Tier 3 article describes a particular study or academic expert, your best bet is to find the journal article or book it is reporting on and use that Tier 1 source instead. The original sources are usually linked; if not, you can find the original journal article by putting the scholar's name and some keywords into Google Scholar or your library website.

What counts as a credible website in this tier? You may need some guidance from instructors or librarians, but you can learn a lot by examining the person or organization providing the information (look for an "About" link). For example, if the organization is clearly agenda driven or not up-front about its aims and/or funding sources, then it definitely isn't something you want to cite as a neutral authority. Also look for signs of expertise. A tidbit about a medical research finding written by someone with a science background carries more weight than the same topic written by a policy analyst. These sources are sometimes uncertain, which is all the more reason to follow the trail to a Tier 1 or Tier 2 source whenever possible.

TIER 4

AGENDA DRIVEN OR PIECES FROM UNKNOWN SOURCES

This tier is essentially everything else, including Wikipedia. These types of sources—especially Wikipedia—can be hugely helpful in identifying interesting topics, positions within a debate, keywords to search, and, sometimes, higher-tier sources on the topic. They often play a critically important role in the early part of the research process, but they generally aren't (and

shouldn't be) cited in the final paper. Throwing some keywords into Google and seeing what you get is a fine way to get started, but don't stop there. Start a list of the people, organizations, sources, and keywords that seem most relevant to your topic.

For example, suppose you've been assigned a research paper about the impact of linen production and trade on the ancient world. A quick Google search reveals that (1) linen comes from the flax plant, (2) the scientific name for flax is *Linum usitatissimum*, (3) Egypt dominated linen production at the height of its empire, and (4) Alex J. Warden published a book about ancient linen trade in 1867. Similarly, you found some useful search terms to try instead of "ancient world" (antiquity, Egyptian empire, ancient Egypt, ancient Mediterranean) and some generalizations for linen (fabric, textiles, or weaving). Now you've got a lot to work with as you tap into the library catalog and academic article databases.

ORIGINS AND ANATOMY OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE

Most of the Tier 1 sources available are academic articles, also called scholarly articles, scholarly papers, journal articles, academic papers, or peer-reviewed articles. They all mean the same thing: a paper published in an academic periodical after being scrutinized anonymously and judged to be sound by other experts in the subfield. Their origin explains both their basic structure and the high esteem they have in the eyes of your professors.

Many journals are sponsored by academic associations. Most academics belong to a big, general one (such as the Modern Language Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, or the American Physical Society) and one or more smaller ones organized around particular areas of interest and expertise (such as the Association for the Study of Food and Society, the International Association for Statistical Computing, or the Slavic and East European Folklore Association). There are also generalist organizations organized by region of the country or state, such as the Eastern Sociological Society or the Southern Management Association. Each of these associations exists to promote the exchange of research findings and collaboration in their disciplines. Toward this end, they organize conferences, sponsor working groups, and publish one or more academic journals. These journals are meant to both publicize and archive the most interesting and important findings in the field.

Academic papers are essentially reports that scholars write to their peers—present and future—about what they've done in their research, what they've found, and why they think it's important. Thus, in a lot of fields, they often have a structure reminiscent of the lab reports you've written for science classes:

1. *Abstract:* A one-paragraph summary of the article: its purpose, methods, findings, and significance.

2. *Introduction:* An overview of the key question or problem that the paper addresses, why it is important, and the key conclusion(s) (i.e., thesis or theses) of the paper.

3. *Literature review:* A synthesis of all the relevant prior research (the so-called academic literature on the subject) that explains why the paper makes an original and important contribution to the body of knowledge.

4. *Data and methods:* An explanation of what data or information the author(s) used and what they did with it.

5. *Results:* A full explanation of the key findings of the study.

6. *Conclusion/discussion:* Puts the key findings or insights from the paper into their broader context; explains why they matter.

Not all papers are so "science." For example, a historical or literary analysis doesn't necessarily have a "data and methods" section, but it does explain and justify the research question, describe how the authors' own points relate to those made in other relevant articles and books, develop the key insights yielded by the analysis, and conclude by explaining their significance. Some academic papers are review articles in which the "data" are published papers and the "findings" are key insights, enduring lines of debate, and/or remaining unanswered questions.

Scholarly journals use a peer-review process to decide which articles merit publication. First, hopeful authors send their article manuscript to the journal editor, a role filled by a prominent scholar in the field. The editor reads over the manuscript and decides whether it seems worthy of peer review. If it's outside the interests of the journal or is clearly inadequate, the editor will reject it outright. If it looks appropriate and sufficiently high quality, the editor will recruit a few other experts in the field to act as anonymous peer reviewers. The editor will send the manuscript (scrubbed of identifying information) to the reviewers who will read it closely and provide a thorough critique.

- Is the research question driving the paper timely and important?
- Does the paper sufficiently and accurately review all of the relevant prior research?
- Are the information sources believable and the research methods rigorous?
- Are the stated results fully justified by the findings?
- Is the significance of the research clear?
- Is it well written?
- Overall, does the paper add new, trustworthy, and important knowledge to the field?

Reviewers send their comments to the editor, who then decides whether to (1) reject the manuscript, (2) ask the author(s) to revise and resubmit the manuscript, or (3) accept it for publication. Editors send the reviewers' comments (again, with no identifying information) to authors along with their decisions. A manuscript that has been revised and resubmitted usually goes out for peer review again; editors often try to get reviews from one or two first-round reviewers as well as a new reviewer. The whole process, from start to finish, can easily take a year, and it is often another year before the paper appears in print.

Understanding the academic publication process and the structure of scholarly articles tells you a lot about how to find, read, and use these sources:

1. Find them quickly

Instead of paging through mountains of dubious web content, go right to the relevant scholarly article databases in order to quickly find the highest-quality sources.

2. Use the abstracts

Abstracts tell you immediately whether the article you're holding is relevant or useful to the paper you're assigned to write. You shouldn't ever have the experience of reading the whole paper just to discover it's not useful.

3. Read strategically

Knowing the anatomy of a scholarly article tells you what you should be reading for in each section. For example, you don't necessarily need to understand every nuance of the literature review. You can just focus on why the authors claim that their own study is distinct from the ones that came before.

4. Don't sweat the technical stuff

Not every social scientist understands the intricacies of log-linear modeling of quantitative survey data; however, the reviewers definitely do, and they found the analysis to be well constructed. Thus, you can accept the findings as legitimate and just focus on the passages that explain the findings and their significance in plainer language.

5. Use one article to find others

If you have a really good article that's a few years old, you can use article databases to find newer articles that cited it in their own literature reviews. That immediately tells you which ones are on the same topic and offer newer findings. On the other hand, if your first source is recent, the literature review section will describe the other papers in the same line of research. You can look them up directly.

Students sometimes grumble when they're ordered to use scholarly articles in their research. It seems a lot easier to just Google some terms and find stuff that way. However, academic articles are the most efficient resource out there. They are vetted by experts and structured specifically to help readers zero in on the most important passages.

FINDING TIER 1 SOURCES

ARTICLE DATABASES

Your campus library pays big money to subscribe to databases for Tier 1 articles. Some are general purpose databases that include the most prominent journals across disciplines, and some are specific to a particular discipline. Often they have the full text of the articles right there for you to save or print. We won't go over particular databases here because every campus has different offerings. If you haven't already attended a workshop on using the resources provided

by your library, you should. A one-hour workshop will save you many, many hours in the future. If there aren't any workshops, you can always seek advice from librarians and other library staff on the best databases for your topic. Many libraries also have online research guides that point you to the best databases for the specific discipline and, perhaps, the specific course. Librarians are eager to help you succeed with your research—it's their job and they love it!—so don't be shy about asking.

Another popular article database is Google Scholar. It looks like a regular Google search, and it aspires to include the vast majority of published scholarship. Google doesn't share a list of which journals they include or how Google Scholar works, which limits its utility for scholars. Also, because it's so wide ranging, it can be harder to find the most appropriate sources. However, if you want to cast a wide net, it's a very useful tool.

Here are three tips for using Google Scholar effectively:

1. Add your field (economics, psychology, French, etc.) as one of your keywords

If you just put in "crime," for example, Google Scholar will return all sorts of stuff from sociology, psychology, geography, and history. If your paper is on crime in French literature, your best sources may be buried under thousands of papers from other disciplines. A set of search terms like "crime French literature modern" will get you to relevant sources much faster.

2. Don't ever pay for an article

When you click on links to articles in Google Scholar, you may end up on a publisher's site that tells you that you can download the article for $20 or $30. Don't do it! You probably have access to virtually all the published academic literature through your library resources. Write down the key information (authors' names, title, journal title, volume, issue number, year, page numbers) and go find the article through your library website. If you don't have immediate full-text access, you may be able to get it through an interlibrary loan.

3. Use the "cited by" feature

If you get one great hit on Google Scholar, you can quickly see a list of other papers that cited it. For example, the search terms "crime economics" yielded this hit for a 1988 paper that appeared in a journal called Kyklos:

The **economics** of **crime** deterrence: a survey of theory and evidence
S Cameron - Kyklos, 1988 - Wiley Online Library
Since BECKER [19681 economists have generatec, a large literature on **crime**. Deterrence effects have figured prominently; few papers [eg HOCH, 19741 omit consideration of these. There are two reasons why a survey of the **economics** of deterrence is timely. Firstly, there **...**
Cited by 392 Related articles All 5 versions Cite Save

Fig 20.1 Google Scholar

The year 1988 is quite a while ago; for a social science paper, you probably want more recent sources. You can see that, according to Google, this paper was cited by 392 other sources. You can click on the "Cited by 392" to see that list. You can even search within that list of 392 if you're trying to narrow down the topic. For example, you could search the term "cities" to see which of those 392 articles are most likely to be about the economic impact of crime on cities.

You'll probably engage the subscription article databases at different points in the process. For example, imagine you've been assigned a research paper that can focus on any topic relevant to the course. Imagine further that you don't have a clue about where to start and aren't entirely sure what counts as an appropriate topic in this discipline. A great approach is to find the top journals in the specific field of your course and browse through recent issues to see what people are publishing on. For example, when I assign an open-topic research paper in my Introduction to Sociology course, I suggest that students looking for a topic browse recent issues of *Social Problems* or the *American Journal of Sociology* and find an article that looks interesting. They'll have a topic and—booyah!—their first source. An instructor of a class on kinesiology might recommend browsing *Human Movement Science, the Journal of Strength* and *Conditioning Research, or Perceptual and Motor Skills.*

When you have a topic and are looking for a set of sources, your biggest challenge is finding the right keywords. You'll never find the right sources without them. You'll obviously start with words and phrases from the assignment prompt, but you can't stop there. As explained above, lower-tier sources (such as Wikipedia) or the top-tier sources you already have are great for identifying alternative keywords, and librarians and other library staff are also well practiced at finding new approaches to try. Librarians can also point you to the best databases for your topic as well.

As you assess your evidence and further develop your thesis through the writing process, you may need to seek additional sources. For example, imagine you're writing a paper about the added risks adolescents face when they have experienced their parents' divorce. As you synthesize the evidence about negative impacts, you begin to wonder if scholars have documented some positive impacts as well. Thus you delve back into the literature to look for more articles, find some more concepts and keywords (such as "resiliency"), assess new evidence, and revise your thinking to account for these broader perspectives. Your instructor may have asked you to turn in a bibliography weeks before the final paper draft. You can check with your professor, but he or she is probably perfectly fine with you seeking additional sources as your thinking evolves. That's how scholars write.

Finding good sources is a much more creative task than it seems on the face of it. It's an extended problem-solving exercise, an iterative cycle of questions and answers. Go ahead and use Wikipedia to get broadly informed if you want. It won't corrupt your brain. But use it, and all other sources, strategically. You should eventually arrive at a core set of Tier 1 sources that will enable you to make a well-informed and thoughtful argument in support of your thesis. It's also a good sign when you find yourself deciding that some of the first sources you found are no longer relevant to your thesis; that likely means that you have revised and specified your thinking and are well on your way to constructing the kind of self-driven in-depth analysis that your professor is looking for.

The original chapter, Secondary Sources in Their Natural Habitat by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Tier 1 sources are the most credible source for an academic audience. Are there situations where Tier 2, 3, or 4 sources would work as evidence for an argument?
2. This chapter gives Wikipedia as an example of a Tier 4 source because its information is from an unknown source. What sources—or types of sources—could be considered "agenda-driven" Tier 4 sources?
3. If you are unfamiliar with a source or author, how can you determine if it is agenda driven or otherwise not credible?
4. Is there ever a case where a Tier 4 source could be useful in an academic paper?
5. Which tiers of sources are the easiest to find? Which ones are the hardest? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Choose a research topic, enter it into Google and then into Google Scholar, and compare your results. Some topics you could try: college athletes and academics, antibiotic resistance, Ptolemaic dynasty.
2. Using various databases, find one source in each of the four tiers for a particular topic.
3. Find a Tier 3 article that summarizes and cites a Tier 1 academic paper. Click through to the original article. How is the same information presented differently in the two sources?
4. Enter a topic into a general subscription database that has both scholarly and nonscholarly sources (such as Academic Search Complete or Academic OneFile); browse the first few hits and classify each one as scholarly or not scholarly. Look at the structure of the piece to make your determination.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Google provides some great tips for getting the most out of Google Scholar.
2. This resource from Bowling Green State University explains how searching subject headings in a database (compared to keywords) can more quickly bring you to relevant sources.
3. Explore your university's library website! They may have tutorials, workshops, major-specific librarians, course guides, and more to help you in your research process.

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CHAPTER 21.

HOW TO FIND SOURCES

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

Less than one generation ago, the biggest challenge facing research writers like you was tracking down relevant, credible, and useful information. Even the most basic projects required sifting through card catalogs, scrolling through endless microfiche and microfilm slides, and dedicating hours to scouring the stacks of different libraries. But now, there is no dearth of information; indeed, the internet has connected us to more information than any single person could process in an entire lifetime.

Once you have determined which conversation you want to join, it's time to begin finding sources. Inquiry-based research requires many encounters with a diversity of sources, so the internet serves us well by enabling faster, more expansive access. But while the internet makes it much easier to find those sources, it comes with its own host of challenges. The biggest problems with primarily internet-based research can be boiled down to two issues:

1. There is too much out there to sift through everything that might be relevant.
2. There is an increased prominence of unreliable, biased, or simply untrue information.

This chapter focuses on developing strategies and techniques to make your research and research writing processes more efficient, reliable, and meaningful, especially when considering the unique difficulties presented by research writing in the digital age. Specifically, you will learn strategies for discovering, evaluating, and integrating sources.

TECHNIQUES

Research Methods: Discovering Sources

Let's bust a myth before going any further: there is no such thing as a "good" source.

What makes a source "good" is actually determined by your purpose: *how* you use the source in your text is most important to determining its value. If you plan to present something as

truth—like a fact or statistic—it is wise to use a peer-reviewed journal article (one that has been evaluated by a community of scholars). But if you're trying to demonstrate a perspective or give evidence, you may not find what you need in a journal.

Table 21.1 An example of position that might need more than scholarly resources

Your position	A supporting fact (something you present as *factual*)	An example that demonstrates your position (something that you present as a *perspective*)
Women are unfairly criticized on social media.	A peer-reviewed scholarly article: Sills, Sophie, et al. "Rape Culture and Social Media: Young Critics and a Feminist Counterpublic." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 16, no. 6, 2016, pp. 935–951.	A popular but clickbaity news site: Tamplin, Harley. "How You Use Instagram Confirms a Sad Truth about Your Personality, Study Says." *Elite Daily*, April 3, 2017.

If you want to showcase a diversity of perspectives, you will want to weave together a diversity of sources.

As you discover useful sources, try to expand your usual research process by experimenting with the techniques and resources included in this chapter.

The first and most important determining factor of your research is where you choose to begin. Although there are a great number of credible and useful texts available across different search platforms, I generally encourage my students to begin with two resources:

1. Their college or university's library and its website
2. Google Scholar

These resources are not bulletproof, and you can't always find what you need through them. However, their general search functionality and the databases from which they draw tend to be more reliable, specific, and professional. It is quite likely that your argument will be better received if it relies on the kind of sources you discover with these tools.

Your Library

Although the following information primarily focuses on making good use of your library's online tools, one of the most valuable and underutilized resources at your disposal is the librarians themselves. Do you know if your school has research librarians on staff? Research librarians (or reference librarians) are not only well versed in the research process but also passionate about supporting students in their inquiry.

It's also possible that your library offers research support that you can access remotely: many colleges and universities provide librarian support via instant message/chat or email. Some libraries even make video tutorials and do-it-yourself research tips and tricks.

The first step in learning how your library will support you is to investigate their website. Although I can't provide specific instruction for the use of your library website—they are all slightly different—I encourage you to spend ten minutes familiarizing yourself with the site, considering the following questions especially:

- Does the site have an FAQ section, student support, a librarian chat service,

or a DIY link in case you have questions?

- Does the site have an integrated search bar (i.e., a search engine that allows you to search some or all databases and the library catalog simultaneously)?
- How do you access the "advanced search" function of the library's search bar?
- Does your account have a folder or reading list to save sources you find?
- Is your library a member of a resource-sharing network, like ILLiad or Summit? How do you request a source through this network?
- Does your library subscribe to multimedia or digital resource services, like video streaming or e-book libraries?
- Does the site offer any citation management support software, like Mendeley or Zotero?

Most schools pay subscriptions to databases filled with academic works in addition to owning a body of physical texts (books, DVDs, magazines, etc.). Some schools are members of exchange services for physical texts as well (such as Summit or ILLiad), in which case a network of libraries can provide resources to students at your school.

It is worth noting that most library websites use an older form of search technology. You have likely realized that day-to-day search engines like Google will predict what you're searching for, correct your spelling, and automatically return results that your search terms might not have exactly aligned with. For example, I could Google *How many baksetbal players on Jazzz roster*, and I would still likely get the results I needed. Most library search engines don't do this, so you need to be very deliberate with your search terms. Here are some tips:

- Consider synonyms and jargon that might be more likely to yield results. As you research, you will become more fluent in the language of your subject. Keep track of vocabulary that other scholars use, and revise your search terms based on this context-specific language.
- Use the Boolean operators ? and * for expanded results:
    - *wom?n* yields results for *woman, women, womyn,* and so on
    - *medic** yields results for *medic, medicine, medication, medicinal, medical,* and so on
- Use the advanced search feature to combine search terms, exclude certain results, limit the search terms' applicability, and so on.
- Use the filters (usually on the left or right side of the page) to sort for the kinds of sources you want. For example, if you are looking for academic sources, you can filter for "peer-reviewed articles."

Other Resources

As we will continue to discuss, the most useful sources for your research project are not always proper academic, peer-reviewed articles. For instance, if I were writing a paper on the experience of working for United Airlines, a compelling blog post by a flight attendant that speaks to the actual working conditions they experienced might be more appropriate than a data-driven scholarly investigation of the United Airlines consumer trends. You might find that a TED Talk, a published interview, an advertisement, or some other nonacademic source would be useful for your writing. Therefore, it's important that you evaluate all the texts you encounter, being especially careful with texts that some people might see as unreliable. (See "The CRAAP Test: Evaluating Traditional Sources" and "Four Moves and a Habit: Evaluating Web Sources" for more on evaluating sources.)

Additional Techniques For Discovering Sources

All it takes is one or two really good sources to get you started. You should keep your perspective wide to catch as much as you can—but if you've found a handful of good sources, the following are tools that can help you find even more:

- The author of that perfect article probably got some of their information from somewhere else, just like you. Citation mining is the process of using a text's citations, bibliography, or notes to track down other similar or related sources. Plug the author's citations into your school's library search engine or Google Scholar to see if you have access.

- Web of Science is like reverse citation mining: instead of using a text's bibliography to find more sources, you find other sources that cite your text in *their* bibliographies. Web of Science is a digital archive that shows you connections between different authors and their writing—and not only for science! If you find a good source that is documented in this database, you can see other texts that cite that source.

- Bootstrapping is a technique that works best on search engines with detail features, like your library search engine. Search engines tag each text with certain subject keywords. By clicking on those keywords, you can link to other texts tagged with the same keywords, typically according to Library of Congress standards.

The first and most important piece of advice I can offer you as you begin to dig into these sources: stay organized. By taking notes and keeping a record of where each idea is coming from, you save yourself a lot of time—and avoid the risk of unintentional plagiarism.

The original chapter, Interacting with Sources by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your typical research process? Where and how do you find articles? Which new ideas in this chapter would you like to try?
2. What is typically the easiest part of research for you, and what is the hardest? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Library Exploration

Spend ten to fifteen minutes exploring your school's library website, using the questions in the "Your Library" section of this chapter as a guide. What did you discover that you didn't know before about the resources available?

2. Research Scavenger Hunt

To practice using a variety of research tools and finding a diversity of sources, try to discover resources according to the following constraints. Once you find a source, you should make sure you can access it later—save it to your computer; copy a live, stable URL; request it from the library; and/or save it to your Library eShelf, if you have one. For this assignment, you can copy a URL or DOI for digital resources or a library call number for physical ones. If you're already working on a project, use your topic for this activity. If you don't have a topic in mind, choose one by picking up a book, paper, or other written text near you: close your eyes and point to a random part of the page. Use the noun closest to your finger that you find vaguely interesting as a topic or search term for this exercise.

Be sure to list enough information in your assignment so that you can find the source again! The author's name, the article title, and the DOI or URL will all be helpful.

RESEARCH SCAVENGER HUNT

1. A peer-reviewed journal article through a database
2. A source you bootstrapped using subject tags
3. An article from a reputable journalism source
4. A source through Google Scholar
5. A source originally cited in a Wikipedia article
6. A source that provides supporting facts
7. A source that provides a perspective or argument
8. A source you citation-mined from another source's bibliography
9. A text that is not credible
10. A text published within the last two years

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CHAPTER 22.

THE CRAAP TEST

Evaluating Traditional Sources

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

If there's no such thing as an inherently "good" or "bad" source, how do we determine if a source is right for our purposes? As you sift through sources, you should consider credibility and use value to determine whether a source is right for you. Credibility refers to the reliability and accuracy of the author, their writing, and the publisher. *Use value* is a broad term that includes whether you should use a text in your research paper as well as how you will use that text.

THE CRAAP TEST

The CRAAP Test will help you explore both credibility and use value, and it's especially useful when evaluating sources that you are carefully considering for use in a paper. In chapter 23, Mike Caulfield offers a faster set of strategies for determining the validity of information you find in your day-to-day life online.

Table 22.1 Explaining the initialism CRAAP

Feature	Explanation
Currency (C)	How recently was the text created? Does that impact the accuracy or value of its contents, either positively or negatively? Generally, a text that is current is more credible and useful: data will be more accurate, the content will reflect more up-to-date ideas, and so on. However, there are some exceptions. • A text that is not current might be useful because it reflects attitudes of its publication era. For instance, if I were writing a paper on sexism in the office environment, it might be convincing to include a memo on dress codes from 1973. • A text that is current might not be useful because the phenomena it discusses might not have existed long enough to have substantial evidence or study. For instance, if you were writing a paper on nanorobotics, it would be difficult to evaluate long-term impacts of this emergent technology because it simply hasn't been around long enough.
Relevance (R)	Is the text closely related to your topic? Does it illuminate your topic, or is it only tangentially connected? A text that is relevant is generally more useful, as you probably already realize. Exceptions to this might include the following: • A text that is too relevant might not be useful because it might create overlap or redundancy in your argument. You should use texts like this to pivot, complicate, or challenge your topic so you are not just repeating someone else's ideas. • A text that is only slightly relevant might be useful in providing background knowledge, drawing out an analogy, or gesturing to important questions or ideas you don't have room to discuss in the scope of your paper.
Accuracy (A)	Is there any reason to doubt the validity of the text? Is it possible that the information and ideas included are simply untrue? You might start out by relying on your instincts to answer these questions, but your evaluation of accuracy should also be informed more objectively by the other elements of the CRAAP Test (e.g., if a text is outdated, it might no longer be accurate). Of course, the importance of this element depends on your use of the source; for instance, if you were writing a paper on conservative responses to Planned Parenthood, you might find it useful to discuss the inaccurate videos released by a pro-choice group several years ago.

Authority (A)	Who is the author? Who is the publisher? Do either or both demonstrate ethos through their experience, credentials, or public perception? This element also depends on your use of the source; for instance, if you were writing a paper on cyberbullying, you might find it useful to bring in posts from anonymous teenagers. Often, though, academic presses (e.g., Oxford University Press) and government publishers (e.g., hhs.gov) are assumed to have an increased degree of authority when compared with popular presses (e.g., Routledge), popular periodicals (e.g., *Time*), or self-published texts (e.g., blogs). It may be difficult to ascertain an author's and a publisher's authority without further research, but here are some red flags if you're evaluating a source with questionable authority: • There is no author listed. • The website hosting the web page or article is incomplete, outdated, or broken. • The author seems to use little factual evidence. • The author is known for extreme or one-dimensional views. • The source has a sponsoring organization with an agenda that might undermine the validity of the information.
Purpose (P)	What is the author trying to achieve with their text? What are their motivations or reasons for publication and writing? Does that purpose influence the credibility of the text? As we've discussed, every piece of rhetoric has a purpose. It's important that you identify and evaluate the implied and/or declared purposes of a text before you put too much faith in it.

Even though you're making efforts to keep an open mind to different positions, it is likely that you've already formed some opinions about your topic. As you review each source, try to read both with and against the grain; in other words, try to position yourself at least once as a doubter and at least once as a believer.

Regardless of what the source actually has to say, you should (1) try to take the argument on its own terms and try to appreciate or understand it *and* (2) be critical of it, looking for its blind spots and problems. This is especially important when we encounter texts we really like or really dislike—we need to challenge our early perceptions to interrupt projection.

The original chapter, Interacting with Sources by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When would the CRAAP Test be most useful, and when would it not? Can you imagine yourself using it to, say, evaluate a video online? Why or why not? Is it still a useful set of guidelines, even if we wouldn't use it in all cases?
2. What other rules have you been taught for evaluating sources? Talk about these with a peer or instructor. Which rules hold up, and which are myths?

ACTIVITIES

1. Use the CRAAP Test to evaluate a source, step by step. What did this process help you notice?

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CHAPTER 23.

FOUR MOVES AND A HABIT

Evaluating Web Sources

MIKE CAULFIELD; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

The web is a unique terrain, substantially different from print materials. Too often, attempts at teaching information literacy for the web do not take into account both the web's unique challenges and its unique affordances.

Much web literacy I've seen either asks students to look at web pages and think about them or teaches them to publish and produce things on the web. While both of these activities are valuable, neither addresses a set of real problems students confront daily: evaluating the information that reaches them through their social media streams. For these daily tasks, students need concrete strategies and tactics for tracing claims to sources and for analyzing the nature and reliability of those sources.

The web gives us many such strategies, tactics, and tools, which, properly used, can get students closer to the truth of a statement or image within seconds. Unfortunately, we do not teach students these specific techniques. As many people have noted, the web is both the largest propaganda machine ever created and the most amazing fact-checking tool ever invented. But if we haven't taught our students those fact-checking capabilities, is it any surprise that propaganda is winning?

This chapter is an unabashedly practical quick-start guide for the student fact-checker. It supplements generic information literacy with the specific web-based techniques that can get you closer to the truth on the web more quickly.

INTRODUCING SIFT

Fig 23.1 The steps of SIFT: stop; investigate the source; find trusted coverage; and trace claims, quotes, and media to the original context

Stop

The first move is the simplest. **Stop** reminds you of two things.

First, when you first hit a page and start to read it—stop. Ask yourself whether you know and trust the website or source of the information. If you don't, use the other moves to get a sense of what you're looking at. Don't read it or share it until you know what it is.

Second, after you begin the process and use the moves, it can be too easy to go down a rabbit hole, chasing after more and more obscure facts or getting lost in a "click cycle." If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed in your fact-checking efforts, stop and take a second to remind yourself what your goal is. Adjust your strategy if it isn't working. Make sure you approach the problem at the right amount of depth for your purpose.

Investigate The Source

We'll go more into this move in the next lesson. The key idea is to know what you're reading *before* you read it.

This doesn't mean you have to do a Pulitzer Prize–winning investigation into a source before you engage with it. But if you're reading a piece on economics by a Nobel Prize–winning economist, you should know that before you read it. Conversely, if you're watching a video on the many benefits of milk consumption that was put out by the dairy industry, you probably want to know that as well.

This doesn't mean the Nobel economist will always be right and that the dairy industry can't ever be trusted. But knowing the expertise and agenda of the source is crucial to your interpretation of what they say. Taking sixty seconds to figure out where it is from before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time and, if it is, help you better understand its significance and trustworthiness.

Find Trusted Coverage

Sometimes you don't care about the particular article that reaches you. You care about the claim the article is making. You want to know if it is true or false. You want to know if it represents a consensus viewpoint or if it is the subject of much disagreement.

In this case, your best strategy is to ignore the source that reached you and look for other trusted reporting or analysis on the claim. In other words, if you receive an article that says koalas have just been declared extinct from the Save the Koalas Foundation, the winning strategy may be to open up a new tab and find the best source you can that covers this or, just as importantly, scan multiple sources to see what the consensus seems to be. In these cases, we encourage you to "find trusted coverage" that better suits your needs—more trusted, more in-depth, or maybe just more varied. We'll show you some techniques to do this sort of thing quickly.

Do you have to agree with the consensus? Absolutely not! But understanding the context and history of a claim will help you better evaluate it.

Trace Claims, Quotes, And Media Back To The Original Context

A lot of things you find on the internet have been stripped of context. Maybe there's a video of a fight between two people. But what happened before that? Who started it? What was clipped out of the video and what stayed in? Maybe there's a picture that seems real, but the caption is dubious at best. Maybe a claim is made about a new medical treatment supposedly based on a research paper—but you're not certain if the paper supports it.

In these cases we'll have you trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in its original context and get a sense if the version you saw was accurately presented.

IT'S ABOUT *RE*CONTEXTUALIZING

There's a theme that runs through all of these moves: it's about getting the necessary context to read, view, or listen effectively. And doing that *first*.

One piece of context is who the speaker or publisher is. What's their expertise? What's their agenda? What's their record of fairness or accuracy? So we investigate the source. When you hear a rumor, you should know who the source of it is before reacting to it; similarly, when you encounter something on the web, you need the same sort of context.

When it comes to claims, a key piece of context includes whether they are broadly accepted or rejected or something in between. By scanning for other coverage, you can see the expert consensus on a claim, learn the history around it, and ultimately land on a better source.

Finally, when evidence is presented with a certain frame—whether a quote or a video or a scientific finding—sometimes it helps to reconstruct the original context in which the photo was taken or research claim made. It can look quite different in context!

In some cases, these techniques will show you claims are outright wrong or that sources are legitimately "bad actors" who are trying to deceive you. But even when the material is not intentionally deceptive, the moves do something just as important: they reestablish the context that the web so often strips away, allowing for more fruitful engagement with all digital information.

BUILDING A FACT-CHECKING HABIT BY CHECKING YOUR EMOTIONS

In addition to the moves, I'll introduce one more word of advice: *Check your emotions.*

This isn't quite a strategy (like "go upstream") or a tactic (like using date filters to find the origin of a fact). For lack of a better word, I am calling this advice a habit.

The habit is simple. When you feel a strong emotion—happiness, anger, pride, vindication—and that emotion pushes you to share a "fact" with others, *stop.* Above all, these are the claims that you must fact-check.

Why? Because you're already likely to check things you know are important to get right, and you're predisposed to analyze things that put you in an intellectual frame of mind. But things that make you angry or overjoyed, well…our record as humans is not good with these things.

As an example, I'll cite this tweet that crossed my Twitter feed:

Fig 23.2 A tweet from Twitter user @RonHogan that reads, "The Nazis murdered Senator Schumer's grandmother and most of her children. Trump's father was arrested at a Ku Klux Klan rally." It is in response to a Donald Trump tweet. It has been retweeted over 55,000 times.

You don't need to know much of the background of this tweet to see its emotionally charged nature. President Trump had insulted Chuck Schumer, a Democratic senator from New York, and characterized the tears that Schumer shed during a statement about refugees as "fake tears." This tweet reminds us that Senator Schumer's great-grandmother died at the hands of the Nazis, which could explain Schumer's emotional connection to the issue of refugees.

Or does it? Do we actually know that Schumer's great-grandmother died at the hands of the Nazis? And if we are not sure this is true, should we really be retweeting it?

Our normal inclination is to ignore verification needs when we react strongly to content, and researchers have found that content that causes strong emotions (both positive and negative) spreads the fastest through our social networks. Savvy activists and advocates take advantage of this flaw of ours, getting past our filters by posting material that goes straight to our hearts.

Use your emotions as a reminder. Strong emotions should become a trigger for your new fact-checking habit. Every time content you want to share makes you feel rage, laughter, ridicule, or even a heartwarming buzz, spend thirty seconds fact-checking. It will do you well.

The original chapters, Why This Book? and Building a Fact-Checking Habit by Checking Your Emotions by Michael Caulfield, are from Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers

The original work, Introducing SIFT by Michael Caulfield from Check, Please! Starter Course, is adapted with permission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the SIFT method compare with the CRAAP Test? In what situations might one be more useful than the other?
2. Do you fact-check things you read on the internet? If so, what triggers you to do so, and what is your process? If not, why not?
3. Do you think that some people are more likely to trust internet content than others? What do you think makes us skeptical or trusting in that way?
4. What's the risk of people believing what they read on the internet? Is it harmless, or could it be damaging?
5. How might the algorithm of a given site (YouTube, Google, Facebook, etc.) reinforce misinformation? Think and discuss it, and then do a little research to learn more. How does this make you feel? What questions or concerns does it raise for you?

ACTIVITIES

1. Use SIFT to evaluate a social media post of your choice. It could be a TikTok video, a Facebook post, an Instagram story, a tweet, or something else. Write a paragraph reflecting on the process. What did you learn? Which fact-checking steps were most useful for you? What will you carry forward or continue thinking about in this process?
2. Research the terms *misinformation* and *disinformation*. What's the difference? What can we do to be warier of both?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Caulfield's open educational resource (OER) textbook Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers goes into more depth about the practical strategies you can use to check the accuracy of web content.
2. Caulfield has also created a fully interactive course to learn these skills in a more active, hands-on way. Highly recommended—you can complete one activity or the whole course, no account needed! Check it out here: Check, Please! Starter Course.

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23.2 hogan © Ron Hogan

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CHAPTER 24.

LISTENING TO SOURCES, TALKING TO SOURCES

AMY GUPTILL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

THESES AND SOURCES

Everyone knows that a thorough analysis and persuasive argument need strong evidence. The credibility of sources is one key element of strong evidence, but it also matters how sources are used in the text of the paper. Many students are accustomed to thinking of sources simply as expert corroboration for their own points. As a result, they tend to comb texts to find statements that closely parallel what they want to say and then incorporate quotes as evidence that a published author agrees with them. That's one way to use sources, but there is a lot more to it.

Recall from prior chapters that writing academic papers is about joining a conversation. You're contributing your own original thinking to some complex problem, be it interpretive, theoretical, or practical. Citing sources helps situate your ideas within that ongoing conversation. Sometimes you're citing a research finding that provides strong evidence for your point; at other times, you're summarizing someone else's ideas in order to explain how your own opinion differs or to note how someone else's concept applies to a new situation.

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein encourage you to think about writing with sources as a "they say / I say" process. You first report what "they" say—"they" being published authors, prevalent ideas in society at large, or maybe participants in some kind of political or social debate. Then you respond by explaining what you think: Do you agree? Disagree? A little of both?

This "they say / I say" approach can help student writers find balance in their use of sources. On one extreme, some students think that they aren't allowed to make any claims without citing one or more expert authors saying the same thing. When their instructors encourage them to bring more original thinking into their writing, they're confused about how to do it. On the other extreme, some students tend to describe, more or less accurately, what sources say about a topic but then go on to state opinions that seem unrelated to the claims they just summarized. For example, a student writer may draw on expert sources to explain how the prevention and early detection of cancer have saved lives but then argue for more funding for curing advanced

cancer without making any explicit link to the points about prevention and screening. On one extreme, the sources are allowed to crowd out original thinking; on the other, they have seemingly no impact on the author's conclusions.

How can you know when you're avoiding both of these extremes? In other words, what kinds of theses ("I say") can count as an original claim and still be grounded in the sources ("they say")? Here are five common strategies:

1. Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a larger summary argument

> You might find that none of the sources you're working with specifically claim that early twentieth-century British literature was preoccupied with changing gender roles but that, together, their findings all point to that broader conclusion.

2. Combine research findings from multiple sources to make a claim about their implications

> You might review papers that explore various factors shaping voting behavior to argue that a particular voting-reform proposal will likely have positive impacts.

3. Identify underlying areas of agreement

> You may argue that the literature on cancer and the literature on violence both describe the unrecognized importance of prevention and early intervention in order to claim that insights about one set of problems may be useful for the other.

4. Identify underlying areas of disagreement

> You may find that the controversies surrounding educational reform—and its debates about accountability, curricula, and school funding—ultimately stem from different assumptions about the role of schools in society.

5. Identify unanswered questions

> Perhaps you review studies of the genetic and behavioral contributors to diabetes in order to highlight unknown factors and argue for more in-depth research on the role of the environment.

There are certainly other ways authors use sources to build theses, but these examples illustrate how original thinking in academic writing involves making connections with and between a strategically chosen set of sources.

INCORPORATING SOURCES

Here's a passage of academic writing (an excerpt, not a complete paper) that illustrates several ways that sources can figure into a "they say / I say" approach:

> Willingham draws on cognitive science to explain that students must be able to regulate their emotions in order to learn (22–23). Emotional self-regulation enables students to ignore distractions and channel their attention and behaviors in appropriate ways. Other research findings confirm

> that anxiety interferes with learning and academic performance because it makes distractions harder to resist (Perkins and Graham-Bermann 95; Putwain and Best 580).
>
> Other cognitive scientists point out that deep learning is itself stressful because it requires people to think hard about complex, unfamiliar material instead of relying on cognitive shortcuts.
>
> Kahneman describes this difference in terms of two systems for thinking: one fast and one slow. Fast thinking is based on assumptions and habits and doesn't require a lot of effort. For example, driving a familiar route or a routine grocery-shopping trip is not usually an intellectually taxing activity. Slow thinking, on the other hand, is what we do when we encounter novel problems and situations. It's effortful, and it usually feels tedious and confusing. It is emotionally challenging as well because we are, by definition, incompetent while we're doing it, which provokes some anxiety. Solving a tough problem is rewarding, but the path itself is often unpleasant.
>
> These insights from cognitive science enable us to critically assess the claims made on both sides of the education reform debate. On one hand, they cast doubt on the claims of education reformers that measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education. For example, the Center for Education Reform promotes "the implementation of strong, data-driven, performance-based accountability systems that ensure teachers are rewarded, retained and advanced based on how they perform in adding value to the students who they teach, measured predominantly by student achievement" ("Teacher Quality"). The research that Willingham and Kahneman describe suggests that frequent high-stakes testing may actually work against learning by introducing greater anxiety into the school environment.
>
> At the same time, opponents of education reform should acknowledge that these research findings should prompt us to take a fresh look at how we educate our children. While Stan Karp of Rethinking Schools is correct when he argues that "data-driven formulas [based on standardized testing] lack both statistical credibility and a basic understanding of the human motivations and relationships that make good schooling possible," it doesn't necessarily follow that all education reform proposals lack merit. Challenging standards, together with specific training in emotional self-regulation, will likely enable more students to succeed.

In that example, the ideas of Willingham and Kahneman are summarized approvingly, bolstered with additional research findings, and then applied to a new realm: the current debate surrounding education reform. Voices in that debate were portrayed as accurately as possible, sometimes with representative quotes. Most importantly, all references were tied directly to the author's own interpretative point, which relies on the quoted claims.

As you can see, there are times when you should quote or paraphrase sources that you don't agree with or do not find particularly compelling. They may convey ideas and opinions that help explain and justify your own argument. Similarly, when you cite sources that you agree with, you should choose quotes or paraphrases that serve as building blocks within your own

argument. Regardless of the role each source plays in your writing, you certainly don't need to find whole sentences or passages that express your thinking. Rather, focus on what each of those sources is claiming, why, and how exactly their claims relate to your own points.

The remainder of this chapter explains some key principles for incorporating sources, principles that follow from the general point that academic writing is about entering an ongoing conversation.

PRINCIPLE 1

LISTEN TO YOUR SOURCES

Have you ever had the maddening experience of arguing with someone who twisted your words to make it seem like you were saying something you weren't? Novice writers sometimes inadvertently misrepresent their sources when they quote very minor points from an article or even positions that the authors of an article disagree with. It often happens when students approach their sources with the goal of finding snippets that align with their own opinion. For example, the passage above contains the phrase "measuring teachers' performance by student test scores is the best way to improve education." An inexperienced writer might include that quote in a paper without making it clear that the author(s) of the source actually disputes that very claim. Doing so is not intentionally fraudulent, but it reveals that the paper writer isn't really thinking about and responding to claims and arguments made by others. In that way, it harms his or her credibility.

Academic journal articles are especially likely to be misrepresented by student writers because their literature review sections often summarize a number of contrasting viewpoints. For example, sociologists Jennifer C. Lee and Jeremy Staff wrote a paper in which they note that high schoolers who spend more hours at a job are more likely to drop out of school (158–178). However, Lee and Staff's analysis finds that working more hours doesn't actually make a student more likely to drop out. Instead, the students who express less interest in school are both more likely to work a lot of hours *and* more likely to drop out. In short, Lee and Staff argue that disaffection with school causes students to drop out, not working at a job. In reviewing prior research about the impact of work on dropping out, Lee and Staff write, "Paid work, especially when it is considered intensive, reduces grade point averages, time spent on homework, educational aspirations, and the likelihood of completing high school." If you included that quote without explaining how it fits into Lee and Staff's actual argument, you would be misrepresenting that source.

PRINCIPLE 2

PROVIDE CONTEXT

Another error beginners often make is to drop in a quote without any context. If you simply quote, "Students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24), your reader is left wondering who Willingham is, why he is included here, and where this statement fits into his

larger work. The whole point of incorporating sources is to situate your own insights into the conversation. As part of that, you should provide some kind of context the first time you use that source. Here are some examples:

> Willingham, a cognitive scientist, claims that…
>
> Research in cognitive science has found that…(Willingham 22).
>
> Willingham argues that "students begin preschool with a set of self-regulation skills that are a product of their genetic inheritance and their family environment" (Willingham 24). Drawing on findings in cognitive science, he explains…

As the second example above shows, providing a context doesn't mean writing a brief biography of every author in your bibliography—it just means including some signal about why that source is included in your text.

Even more baffling to your reader is when quoted material does not fit into the flow of the text. For example, a novice student might write,

> Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. "We conclude that intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (Lee and Staff 171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

The reader is thinking, "Who is this sudden, ghostly 'we'?" Why should this source be believed? If you find that passages with quotes in your draft are awkward to read out loud, that's a sign that you need to contextualize the quote more effectively. Here's a version that puts the quote in context:

Schools and parents shouldn't set limits on how much teenagers are allowed to work at jobs. Lee and Staff's carefully designed study found that "intensive work does not affect the likelihood of high school dropout among youths who have a high propensity to spend long hours on the job" (171). Teens should be trusted to learn how to manage their time.

In this latter example, it's now clear that Lee and Staff are scholars and that their empirical study is being used as evidence for this argumentative point. Using a source in this way invites the reader to check out Lee and Staff's work for themselves if they doubt this claim.

Many writing instructors encourage their students to contextualize their use of sources by making a "quotation sandwich"—that is, introduce the quote in some way and then follow it up with your own words. If you've made a bad habit of dropping in unintroduced quotes, the quotation sandwich idea may help you improve your skills, but in general, you don't need to approach every quote or paraphrase as a three-part structure to have well-integrated sources. You should, however, avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. If you're struggling to figure out what to write after a quote or close paraphrase, it may be that you haven't yet figured out what role the quote is playing in your own analysis. If that happens to you a lot, try writing the whole first draft in your own words and then incorporate material from sources as you revise with "they say / I say" in mind.

PRINCIPLE 3

USE SOURCES EFFICIENTLY

Some student writers are in a rut of only quoting whole sentences. Some others, like myself as a student, get overly enamored of extended block quotes and the scholarly look they give to the page. These aren't the worst sins of academic writing, but they get in the way of one of the key principles of writing with sources: shaping quotes and paraphrases efficiently. Efficiency follows from the second principle because when you fully incorporate sources into your own explicit argument, you zero in on the phrases, passages, and ideas that are relevant to your points.

It's a very good sign for your paper when most quotes are short (key terms, phrases, or parts of sentences) and the longer quotes (whole sentences and passages) are clearly justified by the discussion in which they're embedded. Every bit of every quote should feel indispensable to the paper. An overabundance of long quotes usually means that your own argument is undeveloped. The most incandescent quotes will not hide that fact from your professor.

Also, some student writers forget that quoting is not the only way to incorporate sources. Paraphrasing and summarizing are sophisticated skills that are often more appropriate to use than direct quoting. The first two paragraphs of the example passage above do not include any quotations, even though they are both clearly focused on presenting the work of others. Student writers may avoid paraphrasing out of fear of plagiarizing, and it's true that a poorly executed paraphrase will make it seem like the student writer is fraudulently claiming the wordsmithing work of others as their own. Sticking to direct quotes seems safer. However, it is worth your time to master paraphrasing because it often helps you be more clear and concise, drawing out only those elements that are relevant to the thread of your analysis. You can learn more about how to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing in the chapter on plagiarism in this text.

For example, here's a passage from a hypothetical paper with a block quote that is fully relevant to the argument but, nevertheless, inefficient:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman concludes our brains are prone to error:
>
> > System 1 registers the cognitive ease with which it processes information, but it does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable. Intuitive answers come to mind quickly and confidently, whether they originate from skills or from heuristics. There is no simple way for System 2 to distinguish between a skilled and a heuristic response. Its only recourse is to slow down and attempt to construct an answer on its own, which it is reluctant to do because it is indolent. Many suggestions of System 1 are casually endorsed with minimal checking, as in the bat-and-ball problem. (417)

> While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Even a passage that is important to reference and is well contextualized in the flow of the paper will be inefficient if it introduces terms and ideas that aren't central to the analysis within the paper. Imagine, for example, that other parts of this hypothetical paper use Kahneman's other terms for System 1 (fast thinking) and System 2 (slow thinking); the sudden encounter of "System 1" and "System 2" would be confusing and tedious for your reader. Similarly, the terms "heuristics" and "bat-and-ball problem" might be unfamiliar to your reader. Their presence in the block quote just muddies the waters. In this case, a paraphrase is a much better choice. Here's an example passage that uses a paraphrase to establish the same points more clearly and efficiently:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments.9 We have the capacity to stop and examine our assumptions, Kahneman points out, but we often want to avoid that hard work. As a result, we tend to accept our quick, intuitive responses. While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests that the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Not only is the paraphrased version shorter (97 words versus 151), but it is also clearer and more efficient because it highlights the key ideas, avoiding specific terms and examples that aren't used in the rest of the paper. If other parts of your paper did refer to Kahneman's System 1 and System 2, then you might choose to include some quoted phrases to make use of some of Kahneman's great language. Perhaps something like this:

> Drawing on a lifetime of research, Kahneman summarizes that our brains are prone to error because they necessarily rely on cognitive shortcuts that may or may not yield valid judgments. System 1, Kahneman explains, "does not generate a warning signal when it becomes unreliable" (416). System 2 can stop and examine these assumptions, but it usually wants to avoid that hard work. As a result, our quick, intuitive responses are "casually endorsed with minimal checking" (417). While people can get better at recognizing and avoiding these errors, Kahneman suggests, the more robust solutions involve developing procedures within organizations to promote careful, effortful thinking in making important decisions and judgments.

Whether you choose a long quote, short quote, paraphrase, or summary depends on the role that the source is playing in your analysis. The trick is to make deliberate, thoughtful decisions about how to incorporate ideas and words from others.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and the mechanical conventions of quoting take a lot of practice to master. Numerous other resources (like those listed at the end of this chapter) explain these practices clearly and succinctly. Bookmark some good sources and refer to them as needed. If you suspect that you're in a quoting rut, try out some new ways of incorporating sources.

PRINCIPLE 4

CHOOSE PRECISE VERBS OF ATTRIBUTION

It's time to get beyond the all-purpose "says." And please don't look up "says" in the thesaurus and substitute verbs like "proclaims" (unless there was actually a proclamation) or "pronounces" (unless there was actually a pronouncement). Here's a list of useful alternatives:

- Claims
- Asserts
- Relates
- Recounts
- Complains
- Reasons
- Proposes
- Suggests (if the author is speculating or hypothesizing)
- Contests (disagrees)
- Concludes
- Shows
- Argues
- Explains
- Indicates
- Points out
- Offers

More precise choices like these carry a lot more information than "says," enabling you to relate more with fewer words. For one thing, they can quickly convey what kind of idea you're citing: a speculative one ("postulates"), a conclusive one ("determines"), a controversial one ("counters"). You can further show how you're incorporating these sources into your own narrative. For example, if you write that an author "claims" something, you're presenting yourself as fairly

neutral about that claim. If you instead write that the author "shows" something, then you signal to your reader that you find that evidence more convincing. "Suggests," on the other hand, is a much weaker endorsement. Saying more with less makes your writing much more engaging.

CONCLUSION

Like so many things in adult life, writing in college is often both more liberating and more burdensome than writing in high school and before. On the one hand, I've had students tell me that their high school experiences made it seem that their own opinions didn't matter in academic writing and that they can't make any claims that aren't exactly paralleled by a pedigreed quotation. Writing papers based on their own insights and opinions can seem freeing in contrast. At the same time, a college student attending full time may be expected to have original and well-considered ideas about pre-Columbian Latin American history, congressional redistricting, sports in society, postcolonial literatures, and nanotechnology, all in about two weeks. Under these conditions, it's easy to see why some would long for the days when simple, competent reporting did the job. You probably won't have an authentic intellectual engagement with every college writing assignment, but approaching your written work as an opportunity to dialogue with the material can help you find the momentum you need to succeed with this work.

The original chapter, Listening to Sources, Talking to Sources by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to "listen to your sources"? Why is this important?
2. Why are students especially likely to misrepresent scholarly articles? How can this be avoided?
3. What is the impact of providing context for a source? Why does this matter?

ACTIVITIES

1. Here is a passage from a world history textbook:

> Like so many things desired by Europeans and supplied by Asians—at first luxury items for the elite such as silk or porcelain, but increasingly products like tea from China for the mass market—cotton textiles were produced well and cheaply in India. The British textile manufacturers focused on the "cheap" part and complained that with relatively higher wages, British manufacturers could not compete. India had a competitive advantage in the eighteenth century, being able to undersell in the world market virtually any other producer of textiles. Some thought the reason for cheap Indian textiles was because of a low living standard, or a large population earning depressed wages, but all of those have been shown to not be true: Indian textile workers in the eighteenth century had just as high a standard of living as British workers. So, if it was not a low standard of living that gave India its competitive advance, what did?
>
> In a word: agriculture. Indian agriculture was so productive that the amount of food produced, and hence its cost, was significantly lower than in Europe. In the preindustrial age, when working families spent 60–80 percent of their earnings on food, the cost of food was the primary determinant of their real wages (i.e., how much a pound, dollar, a real, or a pagoda could buy). In India (and China and Japan as well), the amount of grain harvested from a given amount of seed was in the ratio of 20:1 (e.g., twenty bushels of rice harvested for every one planted), whereas in England it was at best 8:1. Asian agriculture thus was more than twice as efficient as British (and by extension European) agriculture, and food—the major component in the cost of living—cost less in Asia. (Marks 95)

Drawing on this passage, try out different quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing options:

1. Quote a key phrase or part of a sentence, naming the source and incorporating the quote within your own logic.

2. Quote an entire sentence or two, providing context and incorporating the quote within your own logic.

3. Construct an unacceptable paraphrase of part of the passage, copying a couple of sentences and changing just a few of the keywords.

4. Construct a successful paraphrase of part of the passage, describing it in your own words.

5. Write a sentence, with a citation, that summarizes the general point of the passage.

6. Rewrite your responses to 1 and 2 above, changing the verbs of attribution. How do the new verbs change the meaning or tone of your sentence?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Graff and Birkenstein's book, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, is a gem and well worth reading. They offer a series of templates that can help you visualize new ways of relating to sources and constructing arguments.

2. Another excellent resource is Gordon Harvey's *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*. In it, he discusses the key principles for incorporating sources, the stylistic conventions for quoting and paraphrasing, and the basics of common citation styles. That's information you want to have at the ready.

3. Many university writing centers have nicely concise online guides to summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. There are especially good ones at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Washington, and, as always, the Purdue OWL.

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CHAPTER 25.

QUOTING, SUMMARIZING, AND PARAPHRASING

SHANE ABRAMS; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

FINDING YOUR POSITION, POSTURE, AND PERSPECTIVE

As you begin drafting your research essay, remember the conversation analogy: by using other voices, you are entering into a discussion that is much bigger than just you, even bigger than the authors you cite. However, what you have to say is important, so you are bringing together your ideas with others' ideas from a unique interpretive standpoint. Although it may take you a while to find it, you should be searching for your unique position in a complex network of discourse.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you consider this:

- How would I introduce this topic to someone who is completely unfamiliar?
- What are the major viewpoints on this topic? Remember that very few issues have only two sides.
- With which viewpoints do I align? With which viewpoints do I disagree? Consider agreement ("Yes"), disagreement ("No"), and qualification ("Yes, but…").
- What did I know about this issue before I began researching? What have I learned so far?
- What is my rhetorical purpose for this project? If your purpose is to argue a position, be sure that you feel comfortable with the terms and ideas discussed in the previous section on argumentation.

SITUATING YOURSELF USING YOUR RESEARCH

While you're drafting, be diligent and deliberate with your use of other people's words, ideas, and perspectives. Foreground your thesis (even if it's still in progress), and use paraphrases, direct quotes, and summary in the background to explain, support, complicate, or contrast your perspective.

Depending on the work you've done to this point, you may have a reasonable body of quotes, summaries, and paraphrases that you can draw from. Whether or not you've been collecting evidence throughout your research process, be sure to return to the original sources to ensure the accuracy and efficacy of your quotes, summaries, and paraphrases.

Quoting

A direct quote uses quotation marks (" ") to indicate where you're borrowing an author's words verbatim in your own writing. Use a direct quote if someone else wrote or said something in a distinctive or particular way and you want to capture their words exactly.

Direct quotes are good for establishing *ethos* and providing evidence. Quoting is a good choice when *how* something is said matters; it gives readers a sense of the tone, style, and perspective of the original source.

In a humanities essay, you will be expected to use some direct quotes; however, too many direct quotes can overwhelm your thesis and actually undermine your sense of *ethos.* Your research paper should strike a balance between quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing—and articulating your own perspective!

Summarizing

Summarizing refers to the action of boiling down an author's ideas into a shorter version in your own words. Summary demonstrates your understanding of a text, but it also can be useful in giving background information or making a complex idea more accessible.

Paraphrasing

When we paraphrase, we are processing information or ideas from another person's text and putting them in our own words. The main difference between paraphrase and summary is scope: if summarizing means rewording and condensing, then paraphrasing means rewording without drastically altering length. However, paraphrasing is also generally more faithful to the spirit of the original; whereas a summary requires you to process and invites your own perspective, a paraphrase ought to mirror back the original idea using your own language.

Paraphrasing is helpful for establishing background knowledge or general consensus, simplifying a complicated idea, or reminding your reader of a certain part of another text. It is also valuable when relaying statistics or historical information, both of which are usually more fluidly woven into your writing when spoken with your own voice.

Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you must always include an appropriate citation; see chapters 29, "Deconstructing Plagiarism," and 30, "Giving Credit Where It's Due: Why and How to Cite Your Sources," for more on how to do this ethically.

Each of these three tactics should support your argument: you should integrate quotes, paraphrases, and summary with your own writing. Below, you can see three examples of these tools. Consider how the direct quote, paraphrase, and summary could each be used to achieve different purposes:

> It has been suggested (again rather anecdotally) that giraffes do communicate using infrasonic vocalizations (the signals are verbally described to be similar—in structure and function—to the low-frequency, infrasonic "rumbles" of elephants). It was further speculated that the extensive frontal

> sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production. Moreover, particular neck movements (e.g. the neck stretch) are suggested to be associated with the production of infrasonic vocalizations. (Baotic et al. 3)

Table 25.1 Illustrating different ways of referencing sources within a text

Style of Reference	Example
Quote	Some zoological experts have pointed out that the evidence for giraffe hums has been "rather anecdotally" reported (Baotic et al. 3). However, some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production" (3).
Paraphrase	Giraffes emit a low-pitch noise; some scientists believe that this hum can be used for communication with other members of the social group, but others are skeptical because of the dearth of research on giraffe noises. According to Baotic et al., the anatomy of the animal suggests that they may be making deliberate and specific noises (3).
Summary	Baotic et al. conducted a study on giraffe hums in response to speculation that these noises are used deliberately for communication.

There are infinite ways to bring evidence into your discussion. For now, let's revisit a formula that many students find productive as they find their footing in research writing:

FRONT-LOAD + QUOTE/PARAPHRASE/ SUMMARIZE + (CITE) + EXPLAIN/ ELABORATE/ANALYZE

Table 25.2 The front load + formula expounded upon

Variable	Elaboration
Front-load + *(1–2 sentences)*	Set your reader up for the quote using a signpost (also known as a "signal phrase"). Don't drop quotes in abruptly: by front-loading, you can guide your reader's interpretation.
Quote/paraphrase/ summarize +	Use whichever technique is relevant to your rhetorical purpose at that exact point.
(Cite) +	Use an in-text citation appropriate to your discipline. It doesn't matter if you quote, paraphrase, or summarize—all three require a citation.
Explain, elaborate, analyze *(2–3 sentences)*	Perhaps most importantly, you need to make the value of this evidence clear to the reader. What does it mean? How does it further your thesis?

This might feel formulaic and forced at first, but following these steps will ensure that you give each piece of evidence thorough attention.

What might this look like in practice?

> **[1]** Humans and dolphins are not the only mammals with complex systems of communication. As a matter of fact, **[2]** some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production" (**[3]** Baotic et al. 3). **[4]** Even though no definitive answer has been found, it's possible that the structure of a giraffe's head allows it to create sounds that humans may not be able to hear. This hypothesis supports the notion that different species of animals develop a sort of "language" that corresponds to their anatomy.

1. Front-load

Humans and dolphins are not the only mammals with complex systems of communication. As a matter of fact,

2. Quote

some scientists have "speculated that the extensive frontal sinus of giraffes acts as a resonance chamber for infrasound production"

3. Cite

(Baotic et al. 3).

4. Explain/elaborate/analyze

Even though no definitive answer has been found, it's possible that the structure of a giraffe's head allows it to create sounds that humans may not be able to hear. This hypothesis supports the notion that different species of animals develop a sort of "language" that corresponds to their anatomy.

Extended Quotes

A quick note on block quotes: sometimes you may find it necessary to use a long direct quote from a source. For instance, if there is a passage that you plan to analyze in-depth or throughout the course of the entire paper, you may need to reproduce the whole thing. You may have seen other authors use block quotes in the course of your research. In the middle of a sentence or paragraph, the text will break into a long direct quote that is indented and separated from the rest of the paragraph.

There are occasions when it is appropriate for you to use block quotes too, but they are rare. Even though long quotes can be useful, quotes long enough to block are often too long. Using too much of one source all at once can overwhelm your own voice and analysis, distract the reader, undermine your *ethos,* and prevent you from digging into a quote. It's typically a better choice to

- abridge (omit words from the beginning or end of the quote or from the middle using an ellipsis […]),
- break up (split one long quote into two or three shorter quotes that you can attend to more specifically), or
- paraphrase a long quote, especially because that gives you more space for the last step of the formula above.

If, in the rare event that you must use a long direct quote, one that runs more than four lines on a properly formatted page, follow the guidelines from the appropriate style guide. In MLA format, block quotes (1) are indented one inch from the margin, (2) are double-spaced, (3) are not in quotation marks, and (4) use original end punctuation and an in-text citation after the last sentence. The paragraph will continue after the block quote without any indentation.

Readerly Signposts

Signposts are phrases and sentences that guide a reader's interpretation of the evidence you are about to introduce. Readerly signposts are also known as "signal phrases" because they give the reader a warning of your next move. In addition to foreshadowing a paraphrase, quote, or summary, though, your signposts can be active agents in your argumentation.

Before using a paraphrase, quote, or summary, you can prime your reader to understand that evidence in a certain way. For example, let's take the imaginary quote "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

- [X] insists, "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- Some people believe, naïvely, that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- Common knowledge suggests that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- [X] posits that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- Although some people believe otherwise, the truth is that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- Although some people believe that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick," it is more likely that…
- Whenever conspiracy theories come up, people like to joke that "the moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."
- The government has conducted many covert operations in the last century: "The moon landing was faked in a sound studio by Stanley Kubrick."

What does each signpost do to us, as readers, encountering the same quote?

The original chapter, Interacting with Sources by Shane Abrams, is from EmpoWord: A Student-Centered Anthology and Handbook for College Writers

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the value of bringing in sources that you disagree with?
2. Paraphrasing can be a difficult point for student writers. What makes it challenging?

ACTIVITIES

1. Find an example of a scholarly article in your major. Skim through and count how many quotes and paraphrases/summaries it contains (they should all have citations, which makes them easy to find). What did you learn? Share in class. Why might there be variation across the disciplines?
2. Using the table below, create a signpost for each of the quotes in the left column that reflects the posture in the top row.

Table 25.3 A fill-in-the-blank worksheet to help structure citations

The position	Complete faith	Uncertainty	Cautious disbelief	"Duh"
"Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are a nutritious part of a child's lunch."	**Complete Faith:**	**Uncertainty:** Most parents have wondered if "peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are a nutritious part of a child's lunch."	**Cautius disbelief:**	**"Duh:"**
"The bees are dying rapidly."	**Complete Faith:**	**Uncertainty:**	**Cautious disbelief:** Even though some people argue that "the bees are dying rapidly," it may be more complicated than that.	**"Duh:"**
"Jennifer Lopez is still relevant."	**Complete Faith:** We can all agree that "Jennifer Lopez is still relevant."	**Uncertainty:**	**Cautious disbelief:**	**"Duh:"**
"Morality cannot be learned."	**Complete Faith:**	**Uncertainty:**	**Cautious disbelief:**	**"Duh:"**It should be obvious that "morality cannot be learned."

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PART V.

STYLE, FORM, MECHANICS

CHAPTER 26.

IT'S NOT JUST WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT

Style as a Series of Choices

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What you have to say matters. Writing is all about communicating your ideas, argument, or perspective with others. When we talk about thesis statements, supporting arguments, evidence, exigency, and more—that's all about *what* you say.

In this chapter, though, we are going to shift away from *what* you have to say to how you say it. Style is something that many writers develop on their own over time, but giving language to the different elements of style—as we will do in this chapter—can help us better recognize and understand what works for us and why.

HOW TO DECIDE

PURPOSE, AUDIENCE, CONTEXT

Over the course of your day as a college student, you might write a lab report, a personal essay, an email to a professor, and a bunch of texts to your roommate. As a writer, you know instinctively that these different categories (or genres) of writing require different approaches. The content is varied, yes, but *how* you write is also distinct in each case.

A lab report is objective, is fact based, and often uses passive voice with no "I"; its sentences may be short, clear, and direct. A personal narrative, on the other hand, almost certainly uses an active "I" voice and potentially more adjectives and sensory language. Your personal style might lead you to longer sentences in that context, even experimenting with semicolons or em dashes.

You can imagine similar (or even more pronounced) differences between an email to a professor and a text to your roommate. How does your voice or style change between the two contexts? How do you adapt your vocabulary, formality, punctuation, and more to fit each situation? What's the problem with sending an email filled with emojis and no caps to your professor? They might get your meaning, but an email like that might also (perhaps unfairly) reduce your credibility with that particular audience. When we think about how to write something, the most important thing to consider is who will read it and why. In other words, read the room, people.

And that brings us to an important point: how you write or speak in your community might be very different from the expectations of academic writing. This extends beyond just emojis;

depending on your family and history, you may use a different system of grammar, syntax, and dialect than what is sometimes called "standard" English. That's OK! We don't want to change who you are or how you speak with your family or friends.

Some have even argued that the academic insistence on standardized English is racist and socially unjust. For example, Dr. Vershawn Ashanti Young argues that the college writing classroom's focus on standardized English reveals a prejudice against Black and other nonwhite dialects and privileges white language practices (110–111). Dr. Asao Inoue argues that traditional writing assessment (which emphasizes "correctness") ignores students' experiences and leads to a racist writing classroom with inequitable outcomes (52–53). For these reasons—among others—there is a move within rhetoric and composition classrooms to more widely embrace a variety of student dialects rather than insisting on one single mode of writing and speaking.

That said, though, writing is a series of choices—often impacted by audience and purpose—and those choices can impact the effectiveness of your message. The goal of this chapter is to help you identify the places in your writing where you can make a choice—more or less formal, longer or shorter sentences, dialect or standardized English (or a blend)—to communicate your ideas in a particular context. Choices like this can make your writing clearer and more rhetorically effective.

We make these stylistic changes not to hide who we are but because the purpose, audience, and context of each writing task are different. It is true, though, that some people feel like they have to hide their voice more than others in order to "fit" in college writing. The question of how to honor a diversity of voices and experiences—while still acknowledging that standardized English or academic writing is the expectation in many settings—is a significant challenge and conversation in college writing classrooms.

Our goal is to be rhetorically effective in our writing, and our strategies may vary based on the particular rhetorical situation in which we find ourselves. As writers, it is a powerful tool to be able to move back and forth between stylistic modes and communication styles—the better to reach our readers.

The following elements of style (in alphabetical order) are just some of the areas where you can make these writerly choices.

Concise Writing

Concision is the opposite of wordiness. Concise writing is tight and bright; it is clear and content-rich. In other words, it contains no additional fluff or unnecessary words.

Why is fluff a problem, at a sentence or paragraph level? Why does this matter, do you think?

In the worst cases, wordiness leads to whole paragraphs of fluff and repetition. Sometimes this happens when students are asked to meet a page-length requirement for an assignment. "How can I possibly write five to six pages about the Endangered Species Act?" you may wonder. That's a great question and one you could work on with your instructor—but the answer should ultimately boil down to better content, not fluff paragraphs. (A few ideas: add a counterargument, bring in another source, give an example, ask a more complex question, etc.)

In most writing, though, wordiness happens unconsciously. The kinds of extra words that we add in conversation can make a written sentence confusing and less impactful. Because writing is a more crafted form of communication, we can take the time to edit ourselves and remove the fluff for a stronger final product.

Consider the following examples:

> *Wordy:* The author of this article, Dr. Belinda Jackson, who is a psychologist and researches cognition, makes the argument that metacognition is very helpful for student learning.
>
> *Concise:* Cognitive psychologist Dr. Belinda Jackson argues that metacognition improves student learning.

Notice that the *content* of the sentence didn't change. Concision is not about simplifying your ideas or removing important details. Instead, the goal is to remove unnecessary words that dilute or confuse the sentence. A more concise sentence is easier to understand and therefore makes a stronger impact. In fact, it leaves room for *more* content: a concise writer can pack an incredible amount of information and ideas into a paragraph.

Conciseness is an ongoing exercise for all writers. Here are a few tips to make your writing more concise:

- Remove unnecessary repetition. For example, a "slow, unhurried, leisurely stroll" could be rewritten as simply "a leisurely stroll."
- Remove empty modifiers—adjectives and adverbs that don't significantly contribute to the meaning of the sentence and are used only to intensify the word they are modifying. The most common ones are *very, really, pretty, totally,* and *just*.
- Use an active voice when it makes sense to do so. More on this in the "Passive and Active Voice" section below.
- Combine sentences to avoid repetition. For example, this version is wordy: "I went to the store. The store was Winco. They were closed." A more concise version would be "I went to Winco, but they were closed." Notice that concise writing does not always mean short, simple sentences.

As Strunk and White put it in their famous book *The Elements of Style*,

> Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell. (46)

That's a high bar but something to aspire to as you work to make your writing concise and content-rich.

Correctness

Many writers feel concerned about "grammar" (I used quote marks here because often what they really mean is clarity, syntax, punctuation, or even spelling—any kind of English usage or mechanics). Often, these writers have been told that their writing contains errors or that it's difficult to understand. This can happen for many reasons. Knowledge of mechanics and English usage comes from a combination of the language or dialect you spoke growing up, the way you process language, your exposure to written language, and more.

This anxiety can be exacerbated by encounters with "grammar Nazis"—people who take it upon themselves to get out their (literal or figurative) red pen and tell you (and the world) exactly what you've done wrong. You may have a grammar stickler in your own life, and the internet is certainly full of them. We've all seen the correction **you're* as a saucy retort to haters in the comments section (one of the most satisfying and, it has to be said, pedantic responses out there).

The internet itself—and all digital communication—is a great example of how language and English usage are constantly in flux. How often do you see a period at the end of a text message—and if you do, what did you do to make the writer angry? How long has the phrase "because internet" been considered a complete thought? Internet linguistics is fascinating in its own right, but I bring it up here as an example of a larger point: grammar is made up. Yes, there are some stylistic and usage choices that make our meaning clearer and more graceful, but some rules are arbitrary and were invented by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century grammarians. ("Never end a sentence with a preposition," I'm looking at you—an arbitrary rule if I ever heard one.)

There is something to be said for correctness. Errors can distract readers from ideas or make meaning murky, and it is true that others may judge us (again, unfairly) for errors and typos in our emails. (Interestingly, one study suggests that the people most bothered by these kinds of errors are not united by age, education, or time spent reading; instead, their commonality is personality type. Extroverts are more willing to overlook written errors that introverted people may judge negatively [Boland and Queen].)

In the field of rhetoric and composition, though, we have moved away from a heavy emphasis on correct usage in the past few years. While there is value in correctness, the most important thing is for your meaning to be clear and your ideas to be sound. Too much focus on where the apostrophe goes can detract from the larger issues of how to build an argument, support a stance, or structure an essay. We need to work on those global aspects of writing before getting down to the nitty-gritty of comma usage. As Stephen Pinker put it,

> For all the vitriol brought out by matters of correct usage, they are the smallest part of good writing. They pale in importance behind coherence, classic style and overcoming the curse of knowledge, to say nothing of standards of intellectual conscientiousness. If you really want to improve the quality of your writing, or if you want to thunder about sins in the writing of others, the principles you should worry about the most are not the ones that govern fused participles and possessive antecedents but the ones that govern critical thinking and factual diligence. (485)

In other words, grammar and usage are only a small part of the larger writing picture. Your instructor may note patterns of error or point out places where a comma would make your writing clearer—but it will not be the primary focus of most college writing classes.

However, when you leave school, it will be up to you to judge the rhetorical situation of any piece of writing and handle correctness accordingly. You already know this subconsciously; just think again about the example of texting a friend versus emailing an instructor.

English usage and mechanics are another way to make your writing more effective, powerful, and clear. Think of them as tools to help you strengthen the rhetorical impact of your words and ideas. How can you use these tools to clarify your meaning and help your readers focus on the good stuff?

See the "Additional Resources" and "Activities" sections for more practical and specific guidance on comma usage and more.

Passive And Active Voice

Maybe this is a familiar phrase: "Ugh, he's so passive! Why won't he speak up for himself?" When we describe a person as passive, we mean that they let things happen *to* them. They don't take action; instead, they allow things to happen without resistance.

That definition is helpful when learning about passive voice in writing as well. In passive voice, the object (or recipient) of the action becomes the subject of the sentence. In other words, the focus is on who (or what) received the action rather than on who (or what) completed the action. Here's an example to show you what I mean:

> *Passive:* The coffee was drunk by Poppy.
> *Active:* Poppy drank the coffee.

Both of these sentences are grammatically correct, but as you can see, they have some notable differences. The passive construction is a little longer, and it emphasizes the coffee (the recipient of the action) rather than Poppy (the doer of the action). The active version is more concise, and it focuses on Poppy and her actions.

These may seem like small differences, but they add up over the course of a paper. Active voice is often considered sharper, clearer, and cleaner than passive voice. In the example above, you can see why.

So why would anyone ever use passive voice? Well, in some cases, the doer of the action is unknown or irrelevant, as in "The package was delivered this morning" (passive). We don't know who delivered it, and while the delivery person matters as a human, they don't matter in the meaning of this sentence.

In other cases, the receiver of the action is more important than the doer; we emphasize the recipient of the action because that's what matters in the context of the sentence. For example, we almost always say, "She was born in 1994," which is a passive construction. In this situation, who did the action (her mother) is not the most relevant information. If we wrote, "Her mother gave birth to her in 1994" (active voice), we would be making a conscious decision to highlight her mother's role in the moment.

This is often true in technical and scientific writing as well, which is why the passive voice is more common in STEM fields. In a lab report, for example, the experiment is more important than the researcher; for that reason, it's common to write in the passive voice. For example, "Hydrochloric acid was then added" (passive) is more common than "I added hydrochloric acid."

We also often use passive voice to avoid blaming others in a negative situation. In some cases, this is considered the most polite route. It may feel accusatory or aggressive to say, "You did this assignment incorrectly" (active). Instead, we might say, "This assignment was done incorrectly." Again, both are correct, but we can make a writerly choice here to focus on the receiver of the action (the assignment) and in this case spare someone's feelings.

However, be careful! The passive voice is sometimes used in this way to avoid taking responsibility. Newspapers famously use passive voice in a way that emphasizes the victims rather than the criminals. Politicians, corporations, and regular people also use the passive voice to duck blame or responsibility. Consider the following examples:

> *Passive:* She was assaulted at a party.
> *Active:* An unknown male assaulted her at a party.
>
> *Passive:* Authors of color have been historically marginalized by the publishing industry.
> *Active:* Historically, the publishing industry marginalized authors of color.
>
> *Passive:* Mistakes were made.
> *Active:* We made a mistake. (Or even more unthinkable: *I* made a mistake.)

How does the active voice shift the focus of the sentence and potentially the cultural framing of sexual assault, racism, and other errors? You can see how the use of active or passive voice can be a political choice as well as a stylistic one.

Passive voice isn't grammatically incorrect, and it has its place. The key (as with all elements of style) is to consider how its use impacts your writing. Notice it and make a choice about when to use it and when to cut it.

You can check your own writing for passive voice. Does the "doer" of the action come *after* the action (the thing that was done)? Or does the doer disappear completely? If so, the sentence is likely in a passive voice. You can also look for this construction in your sentences:

"TO BE" VERB (IS, ARE, WAS, ETC.) + PAST PARTICIPLE (WALKED, TAKEN, SEEN, ETC.) = PASSIVE VOICE

Point Of View: To "I" Or Not To "I"

As a general rule, an "I" voice will give your writing a more personal and subjective feel. That's why a first-person perspective is common in memoirs and personal essays but rarely seen in STEM fields (although some scientific articles do refer to the researchers as "we," which is a personal pronoun but somehow slightly less intimate than "I"). Academic writing in the humanities and social sciences is somewhere in between these two extremes—depending on the subject and context, a writer can make their own choice. Many well-known scholars in these fields use an "I" in their academic papers, especially if their connection to the subject

is important to understanding their perspective or point. Some authors use it just a little bit—maybe they open their article with a personal anecdote before moving into a more objective tone—while others use it throughout a piece of writing.

It's worth noting that although writing without the "I" can be read as more objective, all writing is created by people with perspectives and stances. If I make an argument, it doesn't matter if I frame it with "I argue" or not; it's still my argument. From one perspective, then, using an "I" voice is simply more transparent about the subjectivity of the work.

The "I" voice is slightly less formal, although it can still have a place in academic writing. It can also feel quite personal, depending on the subject. Consider the difference between these two sentences:

> While I recognize the potential value of a longer school day in improving test scores, I don't agree that the benefits are worth the cost.
>
> While a longer school day may improve test scores, the benefits aren't worth the cost.

How would you describe the difference between these two? You can see how even minor changes like this have an impact on how they "sound" to the reader's ear.

Syntax

The word *syntax* comes originally from ancient Greek: *sun* (arrange) and *tassein* (together) became the Greek word *suntaxis.* The syntax of a sentence is how it's arranged or how the words are put together. This isn't just a question of correctness; the structure or order of a sentence affects how it strikes its audience.

Consider a widespread example from the well-known style guide by Strunk and White. Thomas Paine wrote, "These are the times that try men's souls." How do these rewrites change the impact of the message?

- Times like these try men's souls.
- How trying it is to live in these times!
- These are trying times for men's souls.
- Soulwise, these are trying times.

As you can see, sentences gain or lose power depending on how they're structured. Longer sentences can seem more formal, but shorter sentences can be more direct and impactful in their own way. Sentences can be combined using semicolons, em dashes, and more; each method will have a slightly different "feel."

This can be a fun thing to play around with! Experiment with your own writing by rewriting one sentence in three ways. Which one do you like most?

Tone

When you were a kid, you may have heard a grown-up say, "Don't use that tone with me!" As a parent myself, I have to admit that I have said these words more than I ever imagined I would.

When someone says this, they are usually hearing something in your tone—the attitude of your voice—that they don't like. In other words, the way you speak conveys your attitude toward the listener or the situation.

The same is true in writing. **Tone** is the author's attitude toward their subject or their audience. It might be humorous, sarcastic, intimate, distanced, light, serious, warm, cold, subjective, objective, gloomy, cheerful, formal, informal, or something else. This tone comes from word choice (diction), point of view, sentence structure (syntax), and even punctuation.

Formality

The level of formality in your writing is one important element of tone. This is one of the most obvious differences between a text message and an email to your professor, as we considered above. Academic writing tends to be somewhat formal, although it should still be clear and understandable.

Formality is determined by word choice (diction) and sentence structure (syntax). In English, there are often many phrases and words that mean the same thing, but they have different connotations—including their level of formality. Consider the following:

> The research team will *look into* these issues.
>
> The research team will *investigate* these issues.

Which is more formal? As you can see, word choice has a big impact. Try it for yourself. Can you come up with a more formal substitution for the following phrases?

- Come around
- Decide
- Do tests
- Find
- Fit in
- Futz around
- Judge
- Make of (as in "What do you make of it?")
- Pin down
- Stick to my position
- Read up on
- Turn up
- Work with

Again, the goal here isn't to change who you are or how you speak. It's about fitting into the genre expectations of whatever you're writing, knowing that your ideas can be more effectively communicated if you adapt to the audience and context. In academic writing, this means making your word choice a bit more formal.

The reverse is also true: your friends might roll their eyes if you started texting them with formal academic language! How would you adapt these phrases into a more conversational style?

- Examine
- Indoctrinate
- Interrogate
- Probe
- Regulate
- Resolve
- Scrutinize

Three more simple ways to adjust the level of formality in your writing:

1. Contractions (can't, don't, it's) are an informal move. You can remove them to make your writing more formal. However, this is not a strict rule! It's a choice that you can make as a writer: How formal do you want to be? Are there times, even in academic writing, where a contraction flows better?
2. Some common transition phrases are inherently formal. Have you ever heard someone say "while this may be the case" or "therefore" in casual conversation?! Only if you have very fancy friends. You can add these to boost your formality or cut them to make your writing more approachable and relatable.
3. Exclamation points are also informal. Again, they're not forbidden in academic writing—but they are infrequent. Use them only with intention and care to highlight an important point.

Voice

Imagine you're sitting around with your friends, debating the qualities of a recent Netflix series. Even though you're all talking about the same thing, the way you say things is different: the resonance of your actual voice, of course, but also your word choice, accent, speed, and more.

This is true in writing too. In any piece of writing, you can include some of your personal "voice" in the piece. Letting yourself shine through often makes a paper more interesting and engaging to read! Voice is the part of your writing that is unique to you as a writer; it's like your fingerprint (or, well, your voice). It comes from word choice, syntax, punctuation, and point of view.

Voice is related to tone but slightly different. Voice is about who you are as a writer, while tone is about how you feel about your subject or audience. In other words, my voice is still my own, whether I'm annoyed, charmed, or frazzled.

What part of your voice comes through—and how much—might depend on the audience and context of the piece. For that reason, many writers have an academic writing "persona." In other words, writers choose (consciously or unconsciously) to present a particular aspect of their character in an academic setting. That doesn't mean it's fake, but it's how they want to be seen in that context (and is probably not a full view of every part of who they are).

Of course, you can imagine how this could *feel* fake if you are new to academic writing or if academic style asks you to push aside your language background or dialect. Writing personas and voice raise complicated questions about what we expect of writers and students.

For example, in writing this chapter, I am writing in a teacherly persona. My voice here is similar to how I would speak in a classroom: warm, friendly, and unpretentious. My tone or attitude toward the subject (style) and the audience (you) is informal and, I hope, encouraging and helpful without being patronizing.

The voice I am using here is authentic—it does really feel true to me and who I am—and that's easy for me to achieve after teaching for many years. It's mostly unconscious at this point, but that certainly wasn't the case when I started my career! Even still, this writing voice isn't every part of me. My voice can be sassier—or even raucous!—in a lively text chain with friends, and it's stern in an angry email to my insurance company. However, in all of those scenarios, you can hear me. How I write is always a little different than how you write—and that's a good thing. It makes writing more interesting and engaging to read.

One of the best ways to develop your voice is to write a lot. You might try writing a page a day, or reading your own work out loud, or asking a friend to read through your work. Writers have to "find" their own voice through time and practice.

Ultimately, the goal is to find a balance between yourself and the writing expectations of the genre. Find an academic writing style (or persona) that feels appropriate and—if possible—true to who you are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think it's problematic to ask students to write only in standardized English? Who benefits from this expectation and who is harmed? How might this expectation impact writers' experience or success in the classroom or other settings?

2. Vershawn Ashanti Young argues that rather than expecting students to shift between their personal dialects and dominant (standardized) English, we should all become "plurilingual" in order to better understand and be open to a mix of dialects. What do you think about this solution?

3. Why is wordiness a problem at a sentence or paragraph level? Why does this matter, do you think? What is the risk of filling up 10% of your paper with fluff? How will that change the quality of the final product?

4. How would you describe the tone and voice of this chapter? What writerly choices impact the tone here? Why do you think I made those choices? Is it effective?

ACTIVITIES

1. Select one paragraph from a paper that you have previously completed (for this class or another). Revise it for conciseness using the guidelines in this chapter. What patterns do you notice in your own writing? Which version of the paragraph do you like better and why?

2. Research one of the following areas of English usage and mechanics, and then teach it to a small or large group of your peers. Be sure to explain the rule and why/if it matters. Write two to three good examples and one bad example of the rule to help your audience understand.

    - Comma to separate independent clauses
    - Comma after an introductory phrase
    - Comma to set off nonrestrictive clauses
    - Semicolons
    - Colons
    - Parallelism
    - Singular they

3. Look at three to four magazine or journal articles. Does the author use an "I" voice? How does this decision affect the tone of the piece? Why might they have made this writerly choice?

4. Find a recent text chain or social media post that you wrote and "translate" it into more formal, academic language.

5. Take a paragraph from a scholarly article and "translate" it into more informal, conversational language. Which do you think is more effective? What are some different audiences that might work for both?

6. Select four to five sentences from an article or book that you admire. Now, try writing your own sentences in the same syntax as the original. In other words, steal the structure of the sentence, but write about an entirely new topic. Example: I came, I saw, I conquered. My rewrite: She woke, she blinked, she sighed.

7. Rewrite each of the following sentences in three different ways (same content and ideas, just a different order). Which version do you like best?

- She walked the dog past the empty post office, and the dog barked twice.
- The soup may be brothy, but it is delicious. It's also vegetarian!
- Huang argues that the previous studies were incomplete, since they underestimated the impact of political belief on the survey results.

8. Try writing the worst possible version of the following famous quotes. What makes the new versions so ineffective?

- Fortune favors the bold. (Virgil)
- I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse. (The Godfather)
- No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (Eleanor Roosevelt)
- You think your pain and heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. (James Baldwin)
- May the Force be with you. (Star Wars)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Standardized English and Correctness

1. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has many excellent handouts on and examples of elements of style, including passive voice, conciseness, semicolons, commas, and more.

2. For more on "correctness" in writing, including the correct and incorrect usage of commas, colons, modifiers, and more, see Amy Guptill's chapter on Getting the Mechanics Right.

3. Oregon State University has a growing video series on grammar, including topics like commas, parallelism, and gender-neutral language. Check out the playlist at The Oregon State Guide to Grammar.

4. For interactive learning and practice with standardized English, including parts of speech, punctuation, and syntax, dig into the Khan Academy Grammar series.

Internet Linguistics

If you are interested in internet linguistics and how language has changed in the digital age, check out Gretchen *McCullough's book Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language.*

Another fun one is Emmy Favilla's *A World without "Whom": The Essential Guide to Language in the Buzzfeed Age.* Favilla was the global copy chief at Buzzfeed and often had to invent the rules for writing in internet speak. The many screenshots and chat debates here show the social and invented nature of grammar!

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CHAPTER 27.

INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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IN TODAY'S WORLD...

Those opening words—so common in student papers—represent the most prevalent misconception about introductions: that they shouldn't really say anything substantive. As you know by now, the five-paragraph format that most students mastered before coming to college suggests that introductory paragraphs should start very general and gradually narrow down to the thesis. (See chapter 12, "Constructing the Thesis and Argument from the Ground Up," for more on the five-paragraph theme.) As a result, students frequently write introductions for college papers in which the first two or three (or more) sentences are patently obvious or overly broad.

Charitable and well-rested instructors just skim over that text and start reading closely when they arrive at something substantive. Frustrated and overtired instructors emit a dramatic self-pitying sigh, assuming that the whole paper will be as lifeless and gassy as those first few sentences. If you've gotten into the habit of beginning opening sentences with the following phrases, firmly resolve to strike them from your repertoire right now:

> In today's world…
> Throughout human history…
> Since the dawn of time…
> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines [CONCEPT] as…

I started laughing when I first read this chapter because my go-to introduction for every paper was always "Throughout history…" In high school it was true—my first few sentences did not have any meaning. Now I understand it should be the exact opposite. Introductions should scream to your readers, HEY GUYS, READ THIS! I don't want my readers' eyes to glaze over before they even finish the first paragraph, do you? And how annoying is it to read a bunch of useless sentences anyways, right? Every sentence should be necessary, and you should set your papers with a good start.

ALY BUTTON
writing student

For one thing, sentences that begin with the first three phrases are often wrong. For example, someone may write, "Since the dawn of time, people have tried to increase crop yields." In reality, people have not been trying to increase crop yields throughout human history—agriculture is only about 23,000 years old, after all—and certainly not since the dawn of time (whenever that was). For another, sentences that start so broadly, even when factually correct, could not possibly end with anything interesting.

INTRODUCTIONS

AIM FOR SPECIFIC AND LIVELY

So what should you do? Well, start at the beginning. By that I mean, start explaining what the reader needs to know to comprehend your thesis and its importance. For example, compare the following two paragraphs:

Five-paragraph theme version:

Throughout time, human societies have had religion. Major world religions since the dawn of civilization include Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Animism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These and all other religions provide a set of moral principles, a leadership structure, and an explanation for unknown questions such as what happens after people die. Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason. However, the notion of embodied cognition is a place where physical phenomena connect with religious ones. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an embodied cognition that empowers followers to escape from physical constraints and reach a new

spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state toward spiritual transcendence.

Organically structured version:

Religion is an endeavor to cultivate freedom from bodily constraints to reach a higher state of being beyond the physical constraints of reality. But how is it possible to employ a system, the human body, to transcend its own limitations? Religion and science have always had an uneasy relationship, as empiricism is stretched to explain religious phenomena, but psychology has recently added a new perspective to the discussion. Embodiment describes the interaction between humans and the environment that lays a foundation for cognition and can help explain the mechanisms that underlie religion's influence on believers. This is a rare moment where science and religion are able to coexist without the familiar controversy. Paradoxically, religion can emphasize a deep involvement in reality, an embodied cognition that empowers followers to escape from physical constraints and reach a new spirituality. Religion carefully constructs a physical environment to synthesize an individual's memories, emotions, and physical actions, in a manner that channels the individual's cognitive state toward spiritual transcendence.

In the first version, the first three sentences state well-known facts that do not directly relate to the thesis. The fourth sentence is where the action starts, though that sentence ("Since the dawn of religion, it has always been opposed to science because one is based on faith and the other on reason") is still overstated: When was this dawn of religion? And was there "science," as we now understand it, at that time? The reader has to slog through to the fifth sentence before the intro starts to develop some momentum.

Training in the five-paragraph theme format seems to have convinced some student writers that beginning with substantive material will be too abrupt for the reader. But the second example shows that a meatier beginning isn't jarring; it is actually much more engaging. The first sentence of the organic example is somewhat general, but it specifies the particular aspect of religion (transcending physical experience) that is germane to the thesis. The next six sentences lay out the ideas and concepts that explain the thesis, which is provided in the last two sentences. Overall, every sentence is needed to thoroughly frame the thesis. It is a lively paragraph in itself, and it piques the reader's interest in the author's original thinking about religion.

Sometimes a vague introductory paragraph reflects a simple, obvious thesis and a poorly thought-out paper. More often, though, a shallow introduction represents a missed opportunity to convey the writer's depth of thought from the get-go. Students adhering to the five-paragraph theme format sometimes assume that such vagueness is needed to bookend an otherwise pithy paper. As you can see from these examples, that is simply untrue. I've seen some student writers begin with a vague, high school–style intro (thinking it obligatory) and then write a wonderfully vivid and engaging introduction as their second paragraph. Other papers I've seen have an interesting, original thesis embedded in late body paragraphs that should be articulated up front and used to shape the whole body. If you must write a vague "Since the dawn of time" intro to get the writing process going, then go ahead. Just budget the time to rewrite the intro around your well-developed, arguable thesis and ensure that the body paragraphs are organized explicitly by your analytical thread.

Here are two more examples of excellent introductory paragraphs written by undergraduate students in different fields. Note how, in both cases, (1) the first sentence has real substance, (2) every sentence is indispensable to setting up the thesis, and (3) the thesis is complex and somewhat surprising. Both of these introductory paragraphs set an ambitious agenda for the paper. As a reader, it's pretty easy to imagine how the body paragraphs that follow will progress through the nuanced analysis needed to carry out the thesis.

> From Davis O'Connell's "Abelard":
>
> He rebelled against his teacher, formed his own rival school, engaged in a passionate affair with a teenager, was castrated, and became a monk. All in a day's work. Perhaps it's no surprise that Peter Abelard gained the title of "heretic" along the way. A twelfth-century philosopher and theologian, Abelard tended to alienate nearly everyone he met with his extremely arrogant and egotistical personality. This very flaw is what led him to start preaching to students that he had stolen from his former master, which further deteriorated his reputation. Yet despite all of the senseless things that he did, his teachings did not differ much from Christian doctrine. Although the church claimed to have branded Abelard a heretic purely because of his religious views, the other underlying reasons for these accusations involve his conceited personality, his relationship with the fourteen-year-old Heloise, and the political forces of the twelfth century.
>
> From Logan Skelly's "Staphylococcus aureus":
>
> Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is causing a crisis in modern health care. The evolution of multidrug-resistant Staphylococcus aureus is of particular concern because of the morbidity and mortality it causes, the limited treatment options it poses, and the difficulty in implementing containment measures for its control. In order to appreciate the virulence of S. aureus and to help alleviate the problems its resistance is causing, it is important to study the evolution of antibiotic resistance in this pathogen, the mechanisms of its resistance, and the factors that may limit or counteract its evolution. It is especially important to examine how human actions are causing evolutionary changes in this bacterial species. This review will examine the historical sequence of causation that has led to antibiotic resistance in this microorganism and why natural selection favors the resistant trait. It is the goal of this review to illuminate the scope of the problem produced by antibiotic resistance in S. aureus and to illustrate the need for judicious antibiotic usage to prevent this pathogen from evolving further pathogenicity and virulence.

If vague introductory paragraphs are bad, why were you taught them? In essence, you were taught the form so that you could later use it to deepen your thinking. By producing the five-paragraph theme over and over, it has probably become second nature for you to find a clear thesis and shape the intro paragraph around it, tasks you absolutely must accomplish in academic writing. However, you've probably been taught to proceed from "general" to "specific" in your intro and encouraged to think of "general" as "vague." At the college level, think of "general" as context: begin by explaining the conceptual, historical, or factual context that the reader needs in order to grasp the significance of the argument to come. It's not so much a structure of general-to-specific; instead, it's context-to-argument.

CONCLUSIONS

WRAP UP AND ADDRESS THE IMPLICATIONS

I confess that I still find conclusions hard to write. By the time I'm finalizing a conclusion, I'm often fatigued with the project and struggling to find something new to say that isn't a departure into a whole different realm. I also find that I have become so immersed in the subject that it seems like anything I have to say is absurdly obvious. A good conclusion is a real challenge, one that takes persistent work and some finesse.

Strong conclusions do two things: they bring the argument to a satisfying close, and they explain some of the most important implications. You've probably been taught to restate your thesis using different words, and it is true that your reader will likely appreciate a brief summary of your overall argument: say, two or three sentences for papers with fewer than twenty pages. It's perfectly fine to use what they call "metadiscourse" in this summary; metadiscourse is text like, "I have argued that…" or "This analysis reveals that…" Go ahead and use language like that if it seems useful to signal that you're restating the main points of your argument.

In shorter papers, you can usually simply reiterate the main point without that metadiscourse—for example, "What began as a protest about pollution turned into a movement for civil rights." If that's the crux of the argument, your reader will recognize a summary like that. Most of the student papers I see close the argument effectively in the concluding paragraph.

The second task of a conclusion—situating the argument within broader implications—is a lot trickier. A lot of instructors describe it as the "So what?" challenge. You've proven your point about the role of agriculture in deepening the Great Depression; so what? I don't like the "So what?" phrasing because putting writers on the defensive seems more likely to inhibit the flow of ideas than to draw them out. Instead, I suggest you imagine a friendly reader thinking, "OK, you've convinced me of your argument. I'm interested to know what you make of this conclusion. What is or should be different now that your thesis is proven?" In that sense, your reader is asking you to take your analysis one step further. That's why a good conclusion is challenging to write. You're not just coasting over the finish line.

So how do you do that? Remember that the third story of a three-story thesis situates an arguable claim within broader implications. If you've already articulated a thesis statement that does that, then you've already mapped the terrain of the conclusion. Your task then is to explain the implications you mentioned: If environmental justice really is the new civil rights movement, then how should scholars and/or activists approach it? If agricultural trends really did worsen the Great Depression, what does that mean for agricultural policy today? If your thesis, as written, is a two-story one, then you may want to revisit it after you've developed a conclusion you're satisfied with and consider including the key implication in that thesis statement. Doing so will give your paper even more momentum.

Let's look at an example to illustrate how a writer can accomplish the two goals of a conclusion:

From Logan Skelly:

> Considering the hundreds of millions of years that S. aureus has been evolving and adapting to hostile environments, it is likely that the past seventy years of human antibiotic usage represents little more than a minor nuisance to these bacteria. Antibiotic resistance for humans, however, contributes to worldwide health, economic, and environmental problems. Multidrug-resistant S. aureus has proven itself to be a versatile and persistent pathogen that will likely continue to evolve as long as selective pressures, such as antibiotics, are introduced into the environment. While the problems associated with S. aureus have received ample attention in scientific literature, there has been little resolution of the problems this pathogen poses. If these problems are to be resolved, it is essential that infection control measures and effective treatment strategies be developed, adopted, and implemented in the future on a worldwide scale—so that the evolution of this pathogen's virulence can be curtailed and its pathogenicity can be controlled.

Skelly's thesis is about the need to regulate antibiotic usage to mitigate antibiotic resistance. The concluding paragraph characterizes the pathogen's evolutionary history (without recapping the specifics) and then calls for an informed, well-planned, and comprehensive response.

All conclusions should achieve both tasks—closing the argument and addressing the implications—but the author can place a different emphasis on the two tasks and frame the broader implications in different ways. Writing, like any craft, challenges the creator to make these kinds of independent choices. There isn't a standard recipe for a good conclusion.

FORM AND FUNCTION

As I've explained, some students mistakenly believe that they should avoid detail and substance in the introductions and conclusions of academic papers. Having practiced the five-paragraph form repeatedly, that belief sometimes gets built into the writing process; students sometimes just throw together those paragraphs thinking that they don't really count as part of the analysis. Sometimes, though, student writers know that more precise and vivid intros and outros are ideal but still settle on the vague language that seems familiar, safe, and doable. Knowing the general form of academic writing (simplified in the five-paragraph theme) helps writers organize their thoughts; however, it leads some student writers to approach papers as mere fill-in-the-blank exercises.

I hope you will instead envision paper writing as a task of working through an unscripted and nuanced thought process and then sharing your work with readers. When you're engaged with the writing process, you'll find yourself deciding which substantive points belong in those introductory and concluding paragraphs rather than simply filling those paragraphs out with fluff. They should be sort of hard to write; they're the parts of the paper that express your most important ideas in the most precise ways. If you're struggling with intros and conclusions, it might be because you're approaching them in exactly the right way. Having a clear, communicative purpose will help you figure out what your reader needs to know to really understand your thinking.

The original chapter, Intros and Outros by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The University of North Carolina (UNC) Writing Center recommends opening your introduction with an intriguing example, a puzzling scenario, a surprising and/or vivid anecdote, or a provocative question or quote. Which of these approaches have you used? Which would you like to try?

2. Do you write your introduction first? Or last? Or somewhere else in your process? What do you like about that approach?

ACTIVITIES

1. Look at the introduction and conclusion of this chapter. Does the chapter follow its own advice? Mark the key "moves" that the author makes in both paragraphs.

2. Find some essays on plagiarism websites such as termpaperwarehouse.com, allfreeessays.com, or free-college-essays.com and evaluate the quality of their introductions and conclusions based on the principles explained in this chapter.

3. Revisit the introduction and conclusion for three of your sources from a paper you're currently writing (or from a previous paper). Do the articles follow the guidelines of this chapter? How so? How do you account for any differences?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

1. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina also offers excellent advice on writing introductions and conclusions.

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CHAPTER 28.

CLARITY AND CONCISION

AMY GUPTILL; LIZ DELF; ROB DRUMMOND; AND KRISTY KELLY

WRITING LIKE YOU DRIVE

Many student writers get hung up on sentence-level expression, thinking that only elegant, erudite sentences will earn top grades. Or worse, some students assume that they'll never produce strong papers if they do not already have some kind of inborn gift for wordsmithing.

While it is true that some people can produce extraordinarily elegant and graceful prose, it is also true that anyone can learn to write effectively in ways that will persuade and satisfy readers. Producing and reading elegant writing is a pleasure, but what really matters in academic writing is precision.

However, focusing first or only on sentence-level issues is a troublesome approach. Doing so is like driving while looking only at the few feet of the road right in front of the bumper.

Experienced drivers instead take in the larger scene and more effectively identify and avoid potential hazards with ongoing course corrections. Writing well is like that. When you've put in the time and effort to take in the bigger picture of your analysis, most of the microscale moves happen automatically. That is, if you have a well-developed thesis and a carefully sequenced argument organized into cohesive and coherent paragraphs, many of the sentence-level issues take care of themselves. It's easier to write effective sentences when their purpose is clear.

You'll still have to edit for clarity, concision, and mechanics, but if the thinking process behind the writing is well developed, editing shouldn't be a huge chore. It can actually be a satisfying part of the process. One common metaphor notes that a good edit is like the last twist of a camera lens that brings the whole picture into focus.

One approach that often leads to a difficult writing process and a clunky result is the pursuit of "academese": an effort to write in an ornamented and "scholarly" way. As Michael Harvey explains, the desire to sound more academic might prompt a student to write "To satisfy her hunger for nutrition, she ate the bread" rather than simply "She was hungry, so she ate the bread" (3). It is true that a lot of academic writing is laden with unnecessary jargon, but the culture is shifting among scholars to favor plainer language and insist on clarity. Your

instructors are much more likely to find a self-consciously highbrow writing style tedious than impressive. As the saying goes, any fool can make simple things complicated; it takes a genius to make complicated things simple.

My hope with this chapter is to help you see those habits for yourself and, most importantly, how your readers experience them. If you've fallen prey to habits of academese, I hope this chapter helps you develop a more straightforward writing style, one well suited to nuanced thinking and effective communication. And while I don't want you to think of sentence-level wordsmithing as some kind of abstract, enchanted virtue, I do want you to understand that clarity and concision are more than aesthetics. Convoluted or wordy prose may contain some insightful or intriguing ideas, but if you can render those ideas in clear and concise prose, then you will inevitably develop those ideas even further in the course of writing. Unclear and bloated prose isn't just tedious to your reader; it's a needless obstacle to your own thinking.

The best way to achieve clarity and concision in writing is to separate the drafting process from the revision process. Highly effective writers routinely produce vague, tortuous, and bloated drafts and are happy to do so. It usually means that they're onto an interesting idea. Similarly, writers often write the same idea three or four different ways as they're getting their thoughts down on paper. That's fine. In fact, that's better than fine because each repetition helps develop key ideas and alternative approaches to the argument. A snarly first draft is often a great achievement. One just needs to take the time to develop relevant ideas and make them clear to the reader.

For that reason, this chapter envisions someone who has already cranked out a very rough draft and is now in the process of revising for clarity and concision.

REVISING FOR CLARITY: WHO DID WHAT TO WHOM?

What makes a complex line of thinking easy to follow? The tricks of cohesion and coherence are a big help. Williams and Bizup offer another key point. They explain that readers experience writing as clear when the "character" of a sentence is also its grammatical subject and the key "action" a grammatical verb. They provide this fanciful example: "Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf's jump out from behind a tree caused her fright" (29). Grammatically, the subject of the first part is "a walk through the woods," and the verb is "taking place." The character, though, is obviously Little Red Riding Hood, and the action is walking. A much more straightforward version—"As Little Red Riding Hood walked through the woods"—makes the character the subject and the action the key verb. That example goes out of its way to be silly, but consider this example from a website offering free college papers (and another reason why you should never use such sites!):

> Another event that connects the colonist and the English together is the event of a hated King in England trying to take away freedom and go back to the old ways. The idea of how much power the King had struck Parliament. After that, the Parliament and the people made the King sign the Magna Carta, which limits the amount of power the King has. The Magna Carta also affected the rights of the American colonies. It practically took away all relationships between the King and the colonies. After the relationship was broken, America broke off from England. (MV22091)

Apparently, the author is claiming that the colonists (in the 1700s?) pushed back against the power of the English Crown in a manner similar to the Parliamentarians in 1215 (after having apparently been "struck" by an "idea" of "how much power the King had"). Grammatically, the subjects are an "event" and an "idea" rather than the characters, colonists, the king, and Parliament. The third sentence is refreshingly straightforward in structure (though vague on details). The fifth and sixth sentences are fairly straightforward but also incredibly vague: the Magna Carta predated the American colonies by at least four hundred years; how does that document relate to the American Revolution? The last sentence essentially says that after the relationship was broken, the relationship was broken.

If the author were to rewrite the passage to make the grammatical subjects match the characters, he or she would be prompted to clarify what exactly the king, the Parliament, the English populace, and the American colonists did (and to whom), something that the author of the above passage may not actually understand. This example illustrates how clarifying "who did what to whom" for the reader also makes writers clarify it for themselves. Writing clearly involves thinking clearly, and clear rigorous thinking is why your professors assign you writing in the first place.

While the Magna Carta example is comically bad, here's one that is more or less logical but would still benefit from greater clarity (edited for the purposes of this demonstration):

> IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy involve mast cells, which are typically regarded as troublesome cells as a result. Further, the allergic sensitization-processes also involve a role for mast cells. Recent findings show that their functionality not only is proinflammatory but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation.

The above passage isn't a terrible slog, and it's fairly clear that the whole passage is about mast cells. But here's a version of the same passage—the real version, as it were—that demonstrates that the passage *feels* a lot clearer when mast cells, the "characters" driving the narrative, are also the grammatical subject of the sentence and the referent for the key verbs:

> Mast cells are typically regarded as troublesome cells due to their prominent role in IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy. Further, it seems that mast cells are also able to play an additional role in the allergic sensitization-processes. Recent findings show that mast cell functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation. (Kraneveld et al. 96)

Both versions of the passage are consistently about mast cells, but the second version makes that consistency much more obvious to readers, as mast cells are the main character of every sentence. That clear consistency allows us to devote more of our brain power to recalling technical terms (like immunomodulatory) and comprehending the key ideas. That makes it both easier and more interesting to read.

To further illustrate the principle, let's take a straightforward passage and rewrite it so that the characters are objects (rather than subjects) and the actions are nouns (rather than verbs). Here's the clear original:

> What most people really feel nostalgic about has little to do with the internal structure of 1950s families. It is the belief that the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future, especially for its young. (Coontz 34)

In these two sentences, the character is a belief rather than a person or thing. However, the passage is still clear to the reader because it keeps the character consistent and explains what that character does (creates nostalgia) and to whom (people at large). Imagine if the author wrote this instead:

> People feel nostalgic not about the internal structure of 1950s families. Rather, the beliefs about how the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future (especially for its young) are what lead to those nostalgic feelings.

This second version says substantially the same thing, but it's tedious to read because the character changes abruptly from "people" to "beliefs" (which works against cohesion), and one has to get to the end of the sentence to learn how these beliefs fit in. The key point is this: one of the best things you can do to revise for greater clarity is to recast a passage so that the characters are the grammatical subjects and the key actions are the verbs.

Concision

Concision is important in all types of writing: every word and sentence should be doing some significant work for the paper as a whole. Sometimes that work is more to provide pleasure than meaning—you needn't ruthlessly eliminate every rhetorical flourish—but everything in the final version should add something unique to the paper. As with clarity, the benefits of concision are intellectual as well as stylistic: revising for concision forces writers to make deliberate decisions about the claims they want to make and their reasons for making them.

Michael Harvey notes that fluffy, wordy prose does not necessarily result from an underdeveloped writing process. Sometimes it reflects the context of academic writing:

> Many of us are afraid of writing concisely because doing so can make us feel exposed. Concision leaves us fewer words to hide behind. Our insights and ideas might appear puny stripped of those inessential words, phrases, and sentences in which we rough them out. We might even wonder, were we to cut out the fat, would anything be left? It's no wonder, then, that many students make little attempt to be concise—[and] may, in fact, go out of their way not to be. (1)

Effortful thinking is something most people naturally try to avoid most of the time. It's both arduous and anxiety provoking to go beyond existing knowledge and assumptions to venture into unknown territory. In some ways, too, the general structure of education conditions students to approach papers as blanks to be filled rather than open-ended problems to explore. When students actively avoid concision, it's often because they want to avoid the hard thinking concision requires, they assume that writing is all about expressing opinions rather than undertaking a rigorous thought process, or they fear that they can't adequately perform and communicate an ambitious analysis.

Many writing guides describe editing strategies that produce a vivid, satisfying concision. Most of the advice boils down to a few key moves:

1. Look for words and phrases that you can cut entirely. Look for bits that are redundant ("*each and every,*" "*unexpected* surprise," "predictions *about the future*"), meaningless ("*very* unique," "*certain* factors," "*slightly* terrifying"), or clichéd ("as far as the eye can see," "long march of time").

2. Look for opportunities to replace longer phrases with shorter phrases or words. For example, "*the way in which*" can often be replaced by "how" and "*despite the fact that*" can usually be replaced by "although." Strong, precise verbs can often replace bloated phrases. Consider this example: "The goal of Alexander the Great *was to create a united empire across a vast distance.*" And compare it to this: "Alexander the Great sought to *unite a vast empire*."

3. Try to rearrange sentences or passages to make them shorter and livelier. Williams and Bizup recommend changing negatives to affirmatives (130). Consider the negatives in this sentence: "School nurses often do not notice if a young schoolchild does not have adequate food at home." You could more concisely and clearly write, "School nurses rarely notice if a young schoolchild lacks adequate food at home." It says the same thing but is much easier to read, which makes for a happier and more engaged reader.

Good parallelism can also help you write shorter text that better conveys your thinking. For example, Stacy Schiff writes this in her best-selling biography of Cleopatra: "A goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter, she was an object of speculation and veneration, gossip and legend, even in her own time" (1). Imagine if, instead, Schiff wrote this: "Cleopatra was seen as divine when she was a child. She became the sovereign ruler at eighteen, and she became well known throughout the ancient world early in her reign. People speculated about her, worshipped her, gossiped about her, and told legends about her, even in her own time." The second version says the same thing, but the extra words tend to obscure Schiff's point. The original ("a goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter") effectively uses parallelism to vividly convey the dramatic shifts in Cleopatra's roles and her prominence in the ancient world.

Concision As Clarity

There is less tolerance for academese than there used to be in scholarly communities; however, a lot of landmark texts were written in a time when there wasn't such a high value placed on clarity and concision. In your studies, then, you will probably have to engage with important texts that violate almost all the advice given here.

Consider the following example from Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, a sociological theorist noted for both his intellectual force and his utterly impenetrable writing style. In reading this passage, imagine "ego" and "alter" as two people interacting:

> Communication through a common system of symbols is the precondition of this reciprocity or complementarity of expectations. The alternatives which are open to alter must have some measure of stability in two respects: first, as realistic possibilities for alter, and second, in their meaning to ego. This stability presupposes generalization from the particularity of the given situations of ego and alter, both of which are continually changing and are never concretely identical over any two moments in time. When such generalization occurs, and actions, gestures, or symbols have more or less the same meaning for both ego and alter, we may speak of a common culture existing between them, through which their interaction is mediated. (Parsons and Shils 105)

Here's a version after edited for concision using the three moves described above:

> Reciprocity, or complementary expectations, depends on a common system of symbols. The symbolic alternatives for alter must be stable, in that they are both realistic for alter and meaningful to ego. That is, actions, gestures, or symbols must have a shared and persistent meaning for ego and alter even though ego and alter are in different situations and are constantly changing. When meanings are shared and persistent, we may say that the interaction between alter and ego is mediated by a common culture.

The revised version is about 30% shorter, and it demonstrates how concision makes one's points come through more clearly. You will almost certainly have to read works of authors who did not prioritize clarity and concision (or even cohesion and coherence), and that's a drag. But knowing how wordiness interferes with clarity can help you distill essential meanings from challenging texts. In many ways, writing well and reading incisively are two facets of the same cognitive skill set.

GRACE

Academic writing is not wholly utilitarian. An elegant and apt turn of phrase is satisfying both to write and to read. While you can't often summon elegance out of nowhere, you can learn a few structures that are pleasing to the reader's ear because they harmonize *what* you're saying with how you're saying it. Here are two rhetorical tricks that you can use to reinforce your points.

TRICK #1

BALANCE

Readers often find balanced sentences and phrases pleasing. The Cleopatra example above ("a goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter") illustrates parallelism, which is one kind of balance: using parallel structures to convey a parallel idea. This parallelism not only helps Schiff be powerfully concise but also quickly and vividly conveys the idea that Cleopatra led a remarkable life. Williams and Bizup offer another example of an elegant sentence in which the two parts are balanced in their structure: "A government that is unwilling to listen to the moderate hopes of its citizenry must eventually answer to the harsh justice of its revolutionaries" (171). The same sentence with the parallel parts marked: "A government that is unwilling to listen to the *moderate hopes* of its *citizenry* must eventually answer to the *harsh justice* of its *revolutionaries*." The balanced structure and contrasting language reinforce the author's either/or point: "listen" *or* "answer"; "moderate hopes" *or* "harsh justice"; "citizenry" or "revolutionaries." The balanced structure adds rhetorical force to the argument.

TRICK #2

EMPHASIS

Read these sentences from Michael Moss's book *Salt Sugar Fat* (328) out loud, or imagine yourself doing so:

> *Version 1:* But far and away, the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others, was the potato chip
>
> *Version 2:* But far and away, the potato chip was the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others.

The first version places a particular rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" because it comes last in the sentence after a three-part buildup. The second version says the exact same thing, and it isn't hard to see that "potato chip" is the key part of the sentence. However, the rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" is somewhat weaker. This common rhetorical trick is to put the part you want to emphasize at the very end of the sentence.

These are just two rhetorical structures that scholars have identified. You can find others (Google "rhetorical device") that you can bring into your repertoire. Most people can't set out to write elegantly per se, and you certainly shouldn't spend your writing time crafting elegantly balanced sentences that have little to do with your argument or analysis. But the more familiar you are with these rhetorical structures, the more often you can recognize and use them.

The original chapter, Clarity and Concision by Amy Guptill, is from Writing in College: From Competence to Excellence

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever found yourself writing "academese"? Why do you think you did this? How did it feel?
2. Why do academics sometimes write in "academese"? Is there any value to writing in this way, or is it all bad?

ACTIVITIES

1. Rewrite these passages to make the "characters" the grammatical subjects and the key "actions" the verbs. That is, make them clearer.

   - The scarcity of research funds for nutritional scientists means that offers by food companies to fund such research may be especially attractive. The implicit pressure to shape the language of the findings to avoid alienation between scholars and companies is worrisome to consider.

   - While educational experiences are an obvious benefit of tribal colleges, the needs tribal communities have for economic development, cultural vitality, and social ties are also addressed by educational institutions.

2. Take these straightforward passages and make them less clear without changing the meaning. Turn verbs into nouns and make subjects into objects.

   - "Statisticians prepared to use spatial models need to keep the role of the models in perspective. When scientific interest centers on the large-scale effects, the idea is to use a few extra small-scale parameters so that the large-scale parameters are estimated more efficiently" (Cressie 435).

   - "Social scientists will be led astray if they accept the lies organizations tell about themselves. If, instead, they look for places where the stories told don't hold up, for the events and activities those speaking for the organization ignore, cover up, or explain away, they will find a wealth of things to include in the body of material from which they construct their definitions" (Becker 118).

3. Edit these passages for concision, using the three moves described above. Be sure to preserve all of the meaning contained in the original.

   - Each and every student enrolled in our educational institutions deserves and is entitled to competent instruction in all of the key academic areas of study. No student should be without ample time and help in mastering such basic skills.

- If you really have no choice in regard to avoiding a long and extended bureaucratic process in making your complaint, it is very important that you write down and document every aspect of the case for use by all of the parties involved in the process.

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CHAPTER 29.

DECONSTRUCTING PLAGIARISM

KRISTY KELLY

PLAGIARISM IS COMPLICATED STUFF

We all know we're not supposed to plagiarize, but what exactly does that mean? Taking ideas from someone else? Copying their words directly? Quoting someone else's language without citing it? As with most things in writing classes, it turns out that plagiarism is contextual. The expectations for attribution and originality shift along with culture, academic discipline, and medium. We'll talk more about all of that later in this chapter.

But just because plagiarism is a contextual, slippery concept *doesn't* mean that it's unimportant or impossible to track what counts as plagiarism. In fact, as an author, it lies exclusively with you to track where the ideas you're working with come from, to attribute them properly, and to understand exactly what constitutes plagiarism in the first place so that you can steer clear of it. One of our favorite sources for understanding citation practices, the Purdue OWL, defines plagiarism as "using someone else's ideas or words without giving them proper credit" ("Plagiarism Overview"). It can certainly be difficult to trace where someone else's ideas start and where yours begin or where your paraphrasing of a source starts and the original language you're building from ends. But even accounting for those blurry lines, it's still **never OK to pass someone else's work off as your own.**

In this chapter, we'll talk about how to navigate those blurry lines between working with someone's ideas and co-opting them and between paraphrasing a source and patchwriting from it. We'll also look at the deeper cultural perceptions of originality and attribution. By the end, you'll have a sense for how to avoid plagiarism and, more importantly, *why* to avoid it.

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS PLAGIARISM AGAIN?

Let's break it down. We know that plagiarism involves including other peoples' ideas or language in your work without attribution. But one of the reasons that plagiarism can feel so fuzzy is that it can be difficult to trace what exactly counts as "including other peoples' ideas" or what kind of attribution is needed. There's also a spectrum of severity when it comes to plagiarism, ranging everywhere from letting an author's phrasing slip into your work without putting quotation marks around it to full-on copy-and-pasting paragraphs from a

source without a citation. There's even such a thing as self-plagiarism, which involves copying your own writing from a previous context or assignment and including it in a new piece of writing without alerting your reader (or, in many cases, your instructor).

In most academic contexts you're likely to encounter in an American college setting, the following can be considered plagiarism:

- Copying wholesale phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from another source without citing, either in the in-text citations or in the works cited / reference list.
- Including language from an outside source without putting it in quotation marks, even if the work appears in your works cited or reference list.
- Patchwriting, or following too closely with the language of a source you're paraphrasing without putting quotation marks around borrowed phrases—again, even if the source appears in your works cited! (There's more on the difference between paraphrasing and patchwriting below.)
- Fabricating citations or making up where you found a quotation because you don't remember where you found it originally.
- Incorporating an original idea that comes directly from another source without attribution.
- Plagiarizing yourself or reusing your own writing from a previous piece of writing. Yes, that means it is appropriate to cite yourself if you want to reference your own writing in a new context!

Whew! That feels like a lot, to the point where including sources might start to feel like a landmine of potential mistakes. But so long as you (1) pay careful attention to where your sources come from and express that in your work, (2) stay mindful of the expectations set by your instructor for proper citations, and (3) treat other peoples' writing and ideas with respect and good faith, you'll be just fine.

PARAPHRASING AND PATCHWRITING: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

When you're working right alongside another author's ideas and putting their language into your own words, it's easy to slip up and let your sentences hew too close to theirs. Before we dive into the tips and tricks for paraphrasing effectively and avoiding patchwriting, let's take a look at what each of these terms means.

Paraphrasing means rephrasing another author's ideas in your own words without using any of their exact wording ("Paraphrasing"). That sentence is a paraphrase of Purdue OWL's definition of paraphrasing, because I communicated the main idea of their quote without copying it word for word. You might think of paraphrasing as a form of mental digestion—you need to fully understand a quotation and have your own sense of what it means before you can communicate it in your own way.

Patchwriting is when an author attempts to paraphrase a quotation but borrows too much language without putting quotation marks around it. In essence, patchwriting is shoddy paraphrasing! Here's an example: say I was trying to paraphrase this quote from the Purdue OWL, as I did above:

> *Quotation:* "Paraphrasing is one way to use a text in your own writing without directly quoting source material. Anytime you are taking information from a source that is not your own, you need to specify where you got that information" ("Paraphrasing").
>
> *Patchwritten version:* Paraphrasing is when you use a source in your own words without directly quoting the material. Wherever you take information from somewhere else, you have to specify where you got it ("Paraphrasing").

Do you see all the similarities there? By reusing phrases like "without directly quoting" and closely following the structure of the second sentence, I've patchwritten this source. The main problem is that I didn't put quotation marks around the borrowed language, which means that even though I used in-text citations at the end, **this would still count as plagiarism.** That may seem extreme, since the passage does show where the information comes from originally. There are indeed some small exceptions to this rule—namely, when you're citing statistics or numbers that would be impossible to phrase in another way. But in general, by failing to show which phrases are borrowed from the original source, you are passing others' words off as your own—and that takes us back to the definition of plagiarism at the start of the chapter.

Patchwriting happens increasingly often when students are working side by side with internet resources, and in the world of social media, borrowing and freely sharing ideas happens all the time. It's also hard to trace originality when we're using common phrases, including phrases like "put it into your own words" that appear in this chapter. It might make you wonder if you need to cite every single phrase in your paper, even if you can't track down who said it first! We could certainly do a deep dive into the question of whether an author can ever be truly original (and hopefully you will do so in class!), but for now, recall what we said about using sources in good faith: if you know a phrase came from a specific source, that's when you're responsible for fully paraphrasing, putting quotes around the directly borrowed phrases, and giving full attribution.

How Can I Avoid Patchwriting?

- If the quote expresses the idea so well that you're having trouble rephrasing it, quote it directly! Do check with your instructor that direct quotations are allowed—in science writing or tech writing, direct quotations might be banned!
- To help with paraphrasing, write or type out the quote in one place, then fully rephrase it on paper or on a different screen without looking at the original so that you're not overly influenced by the original language. You may need to do that a few times to digest what the quote is saying and how you'd frame it yourself.
- Think about why you're including the quotation in the first place: Is the specific language central to the reader's understanding of the subject? If so, quote directly. If you're trying to distill the idea and weave it more smoothly

into your own content, paraphrase it. And in both cases, cite it!

WHY IS ACADEMIA SO STRICT ABOUT PLAGIARISM?

You might be thinking that all of this sounds rather nitpicky, or even like a mode of gatekeeping to catch students out in an honest mistake. And honestly, you'd be at least partially right: accusations of plagiarism can come along with assumptions about who is capable of crafting original thoughts or what kinds of students are more likely to misunderstand or willfully misinterpret academic standards for citations. International students, people newer to academic settings, or people who are fluent in more than one language have been disproportionately accused of plagiarism, either because cultural differences lead them to view citation practices differently or because they don't have as much practice with the academic conventions for citation (Mott-Smith 251; Bloch 223–224). And that's not to mention the implicit biases that instructors might carry about students who don't already come in equipped with knowledge of citation practices in their discipline.

Academic notions of plagiarism are also complicated by the fact that across other industries and media, creators borrow—or outright steal—from each other all the time. For example, Apple is notorious for taking ideas from new apps available in the App Store and building them directly into the Mac operating system, in a move that's common enough to have the nickname "Sherlocking" (Albergotti). The music industry sees constant lawsuits targeting pop artists like Dua Lipa, Olivia Rodrigo, and Sam Smith for cribbing from other musicians, though it's always sticky to figure out where commonly adapted musical styles end and copyright-protected expressions begin (Finell, qtd. in Shanfeld). And when students themselves occupy an information environment where sharing, reposting, and memeifying are the norm, it's not surprising that academia's tough take on originality can feel baffling and arcane.

Any discussion of plagiarism raises complicated questions about authorship, intellectual property, and whether full originality is even possible. The freedom to build on others' ideas without fear of being slapped with an accusation of plagiarism is important to students' academic growth, and scholars in writing studies are increasingly convinced that handling plagiarism punitively does more harm than good to beginning writers (Howard and Robillard 1–7). Rather than treating unintentional plagiarism as a "gotcha" moment to gatekeep academic discourse, it's often more productive to treat it as a learning opportunity that sets students on the right track for navigating the world of citations. That's why we're expanding the conversation about plagiarism, so that students can be more thoughtful and deliberate about their citation practices. Maybe understanding the reasoning behind citations will make it less tempting to throw our hands up and disregard citation standards altogether. Because while these standards might be stringent and difficult to master, their underlying purpose is crucial: to treat others' ideas and creations with respect by attributing your sources accordingly.

While academic writing might demand more formality in showing whose ideas or creations are whose, it doesn't prevent writers from building from or collaborating with other authors. In fact, that kind of collaboration is the very reason why it's so important to cite others' work: academic conversations are more fair, equitable, and transparent for everyone when all participants use the same system to attribute original content to its source. The Apple example above shows the kinds of chaos that can ensue when there is no shared set of standards for building from others' work. Viewing citations as a form of protection for original ideas (as Liz

Delf does in chapter 30, "Giving Credit Where It's Due: Why and How to Cite Your Sources," in this volume) rather than an arbitrary set of rules that you'll get punished for breaking can make the process of learning the standards feel a bit more intuitive.

FINAL TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING CITATION PRACTICES IN YOUR DISCIPLINE

As we've said before, plagiarism is contextual, which means that the standards for academic honesty and citation practices vary across disciplines and institutions. When you enter into a new writing situation, it is always your responsibility to understand and apply those standards. Here are some final tips and tricks for understanding the standards in new writing situations:

- Familiarize yourself with the academic conduct guidelines at your institution.
- Make sure you know what citation format you'll be expected to use in each class (and if you're not sure, ask your instructor directly).
- Bookmark a trustworthy citation reference like Purdue OWL.
- Consider using a research and citation tool like Zotero to keep track of your citations.
- If you're not sure whether something you've written might constitute unintentional plagiarism, visit your campus writing center or ask your instructor.
- If you're finding yourself panicking over an assignment and tempted to plagiarize, stop and email your instructor. It's much better to ask for an extension or get extra help on an assignment than to plagiarize and deal with the consequences later.
- Remember that learning citation practices is a continual process. Even your instructors have to brush up on the latest changes in citation styles. Mistakes are OK, so long as you are treating others' work in good faith and giving credit where credit is due.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Return to the examples about Apple and "Sherlocking" or the example about pop musicians stealing from other artists. Should Apple be able to copy ideas from content in the App Store? Is it fair to sue an artist for using a familiar musical expression?
2. What does "originality" actually mean? Think of some contexts where originality might have varying meanings.
3. If you participate in social media, how does that influence your view of attributing content to its original source?
4. What are some of the implications when we don't hold creators to high standards for attributing content in academic spaces and beyond?

ACTIVITIES

1. Return to a source you're using for an upcoming assignment and paraphrase a couple of key ideas according to the guidelines above. Try reading the passage and then paraphrasing it without looking at it. How similar is your language to the original text? How much did you need to alter your phrasing to meet the standards for paraphrasing? What did the process feel like?

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CHAPTER 30.

GIVING CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Why and How to Cite Your Sources

LIZ DELF

Using outside sources in your paper is a great move. Doing outside research enriches the conversation in your paper, builds your fluency and confidence in the subject, and can bolster (or challenge) your own argument. As a writer, it's important to give credit to the original author whenever you use outside words or ideas. This is true in every academic discipline, and it's true in less formal contexts, as well.

CITATION IS GOOD FOR CREATORS

Imagine that you're scrolling through Instagram or TikTok (or whatever cool new social media platform has been invented since these words were written—the challenge of writing in such a fast-moving world!). If an influencer uses someone else's audio clip or artwork, it's considered basic internet courtesy to tag the original source to give them credit. In fact, if reposters don't do this, the original creator might publicly complain and accuse the "borrower" of stealing their work.

Why do they care? Why does it matter to the creators or artists if someone reposts their artwork? Some people would argue that reposting helps spread the art around, so it's actually good for the original artist. That makes sense, to a point—but how does that argument hold up if the original creator isn't tagged or attributed in any way?

Your answers to those questions are probably similar to the reasons why citation matters in academia. Researchers and authors are generally glad for others to reference their work—after all, they published it rather than keeping it in a private diary—but they want credit for the work they've done. Using someone else's words or ideas *without* citing them—or citing them incorrectly—can feel like stealing. The original author (or content creator) only benefits from the "repost" if you cite their work, leading others back to the original source. In that sense, citation is an ethical issue: giving credit where credit is due.

CITATION IS GOOD FOR YOU TOO

Don't get me wrong though. Citation isn't a purely selfless act. It also benefits you, the writer! Citing your sources builds your credibility as a speaker on the subject because it shows your audience that you have done your research. It gives your statements more weight by indicating that they came from a reliable source. (You should, of course, be using reliable sources; chapters 22 and 23 on evaluating sources can help you determine whether a source is trustworthy.)

For example, if you write that there will be 25 million centenarians (people who are 100 years old or more) in the year 2100, your reader will immediately want to know how you reached that conclusion. "Based on what?!" they'll ask. If the statistic seems to come out of nowhere, your audience could be distracted by the statement. They might even wonder if your arguments or conclusions are well founded, since you seem to be pulling numbers from thin air.

However, if you cite your source—and it's a reliable, reputable source—you will instantly build credibility with your audience. They will be more willing to accept the initial statistic and then listen to your argument on its own merits. You will show them that you have some knowledge on the topic and that your knowledge comes from authoritative sources.

Consider the following examples. Which is the most credible? The answer is clear: it's the one with the specifics and the citation.

> There will be even more elderly people in the future.
>
> There will be more than 25 million centenarians in the year 2100.
>
> Although the United Nations predicts that there will be 25 million centenarians by 2100, other demographers have found that population transitions and global events make it harder to pinpoint. A truer estimate is somewhere between 13 and 50 million (Robine and Cubaynes 60).

As you can see, citing your sources also pushes you to be more specific. In this case, I saw the "25 million" statistic in the article's abstract, but on closer reading, I found that the authors' research actually suggested a range. I had to read the article carefully to understand that point though—another key part of building your knowledge, fluency, and credibility.

Now, depending on your purposes, you may wish for a simpler version of the information. In many cases though, the more complex (and research-supported) version works better—it's potentially more accurate and, honestly, more interesting.

WHAT TO CITE

In every discipline, you need to cite outside words and ideas. If you're not sure whether to cite something or not, err on the side of caution and cite it! It's better to overcite than undercite. For example, you should always cite the following:

- Quotes
- Paraphrases
- Statistics
- Charts or other graphics
- Images
- Arguments or ideas
- Original phrases

Depending on your discipline, you might use some of these examples more than others. In the humanities, for example, quotes are an important form of evidence: how someone says something can be just as important as what they say. For that reason, quoting the original source is common in literature, history, and philosophy classes.

In other fields, the data are the most important point. In your science and social science classes, then, you will probably rely mostly on statistics and paraphrases as supporting evidence. It's rare to see a direct quote in an engineering paper.

Knowing what kinds of sources to use—and how to use them—is part of the learning you will do in your discipline. You can read example papers and articles in a particular field or ask your instructor for guidance.

What's consistent across all of these disciplines, though, is the need to cite the information. If you are using outside words or ideas, you need to essentially tell your audience, "Hey! This information came from another source. Here's how you can find it." You will do this by including two forms of citation for every outside source: (1) an in-text citation and (2) an end citation.

HOW TO CITE

In-text Citation

The details of how to create citations will vary depending on what kind of class you're taking. In writing and other humanities courses, we often use MLA citation (which stands for Modern Language Association); psychology and other social sciences often use APA citation (American Psychological Association). Other citation styles include IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers), CSE (Council of Science Editors), CMS (*Chicago Manual of Style*), and more. Ask your instructor which citation style you should use for each class.

In all cases, though, you need to include an in-text citation (which will match up with an end citation—more on those in a minute). An in-text citation is like a signpost that says, "This! This right here! I didn't make this up—it's from an outside, credible source."

In MLA, this in-text citation is a parenthetical citation after the quote or paraphrase, like this: (Robine and Cubaynes 62). It typically includes the author's name and the page number that the information came from (if there is one). APA is similar but includes the author's last name and the year of publication, like this: (Garcia, 2008). In both cases, the reader will easily find more information on the alphabetized works cited or references page by looking in the G section for Garcia.

Other citation styles may use a number enclosed in brackets [1] or a superscript number1 to indicate that this information is from an outside source. In those cases, the number 1 will lead the reader to the first entry on the references list, where they will find a full citation.

What if there's no author listed? What if there are seventeen authors listed? The answer varies depending on your citation style—so you will have to do your own footwork to find the answer. The OWL at Purdue is an excellent resource for citation questions, whether you're working with MLA, APA, IEEE, or something else.

End Citations

Similar to in-text citations, end citations vary quite a bit. In fact, even the name of the citations section varies: in MLA, we call this the "works cited," while in other disciplines, you may see it being called "references" or "bibliography." In all cases, though, the end citations provide significant details about the sources you cited in the text.

As a general rule, your in-text citations and end citations should match up. If you have six sources listed on your works cited page but only one cited in the body of your paper, there's a problem. In this example, your reader will get the sense that you did some research—but they won't be able to tell which information came from which source or even which ideas were yours and which belong to someone else. To avoid this problem, cite as you go—don't wait until the end and try to insert citations throughout the paper. That's a recipe for disaster.

While the specifics about formatting may vary, most end citations will include some or all of the following things in the order required by the style guide:

- Author(s)
- Title of the article
- Title of the source it came from (e.g., the journal, newspaper, or website title)
- Date of publication
- Volume and issue number (for journals)
- DOI or URL (for digital sources)

Again, though, there will be variation across citation styles. Some elements may be italicized or in quote marks, for example, or the authors' names may use only first initials.

While these differences and details may seem arbitrary, they're important because they tell careful readers what they're looking at. In MLA, the article title is in quotes and the journal title is italicized; if these markers are reversed, it's a little harder to figure out what we're looking at. Attention to detail here can also add to the professionalism and credibility of your paper as a whole.

Here's the good news: you never have to memorize how to create perfect MLA or APA citations. What you *do* need to know, though, is that your sources have to be cited—and that you can find and apply the appropriate rules for your project whether it's in communications, psychology, or civil engineering.

A Word About Citation Tools

Real talk: how do you actually create citations for your papers? Chances are, you use a citation maker of some kind—either online, in the research database you are using, or embedded in Word or Google Docs. Instructors have different opinions about these, but I would argue that they're a valuable tool. Use what you have!

A warning, though: citation tools are a useful starting point, but they're not perfect. The free online versions are especially prone to missing style updates or incorrect formatting. The

database and word processor versions (as well as citation managers like Zotero and EndNote) tend to be better, but again—not perfect. They're only as good as the information they pick up from the source (or that you input, depending on the tool).

For that reason, you should consider the citations that are churned out by these tools to be a rough draft. You will need to check them to ensure that they are accurate and consistent.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is attribution important to online content creators? Do you know of any examples where a creator was not given appropriate credit? How did it impact them?
2. Do you think that attribution/citation norms are shifting and changing in the digital world? Do you see a generational divide, or does it seem more important to some people than others? Why do you think that is?

ACTIVITIES

1. Use the OWL at Purdue to figure out how to create an in-text citation for the following scenarios. Use the citation style of your class assignments.
    a. A source with five authors
    b. A quote from one source that you found in another source (i.e., your article is referencing another article)
    c. A source with no author listed
2. Create one end citation the old-fashioned way: look it up on the OWL at Purdue, find each required piece of information, and use the citation style required in your class to write a full end citation for a source of your choice. Talk through it as a class. Which pieces of information were hard to find? Where are there points of confusion? How did this process help you better understand the citation requirements? How might this help you in the future, even if you continue to use citation tools?
3. Use a citation maker of your choice to create an end citation for a source. Then compare that citation to the guidance on the OWL at Purdue. Is everything correct? What's missing or incorrect?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. For more on citation tools and citation managers: Oregon State University Libraries: Citations 101.
2. For all of the details about how to cite very specific source types, both in text and on the references page: The OWL at Purdue: Research and Citation Resources.

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PART VI.

APPENDICES

CHAPTER 31.

ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL GRADING

While most classrooms still use traditional A–F grading, some instructors are experimenting with alternative methods of feedback to improve student learning. Asao Inoue raises questions about the inequity and racial bias of traditional grading, while many others point out the impact it has on student motivation and learning.

Whether you choose to use traditional grading or try an alternative approach—or a combination of both—it's worth exploring some of these conversations on your own and with your students. Transparency and clarity about what, why, and how you are grading are key.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Gradeless Classrooms

   Alfie Kohn has written extensively on "ungrading." His article "The Case against Grades" is widely cited in conversations around changing how we think about feedback, evaluation, and ranking. For a short version of his argument, see the video "Why Grades Shouldn't Exist."

   O'Connor and Lessing's article "What We Talk about When We Don't Talk about Grades" is conversational, practical, and specific. It includes case studies of how students learn in classrooms.

   Jesse Stommel blogs about teaching, writing, and going gradeless. His posts on "How to Ungrade" and "Ungrading: An FAQ" answer many of the questions and concerns that instructors raise when they consider moving away from traditional grading.

   For a larger study on gradeless classrooms—with some mixed results—see "Assessment and Learning without Grades? Motivations and Concerns with Implementing Gradeless Learning in Higher Education." (This is a permalink to OSU libraries; if you are outside OSU, please search for the article in your own library's holdings.)

2. Labor-Based Grading

   Asao Inoue literally wrote the book on labor-based grading. It is available online here: Labor Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom.

   Inoue answers some practical questions in a more conversational way in this interview: A Q&A on Labor-Based Grading. He has also created a list of suggested readings here: Labor-Based Grading Resources.

   For a brief and helpful handout on labor-based grading and how it impacts learning, see When Your Grades Are Based on Labor. This works well as a quick introduction or conversation starter for students too.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do grades motivate learning? Why or why not?
2. What does a grade represent? What does it tell us about a student? What does it not tell us?
3. If I get an A and you get a C, is that "fair"? Does it need to be? Is that a reasonable expectation in a classroom?
4. What are some potential problems with the traditional A–F grading system in a writing classroom? What are the benefits?
5. What are some potential pedagogical benefits of removing grades from writing? Are there potential downsides? How could we avoid those issues?
6. How have grades affected your approach to writing in the past?
7. Think of a time when grading helped you improve. What was helpful about it specifically? Why has it stuck with you?
8. Think of a time when grading has impacted you negatively. How did it impact you? How did it affect your approach going forward? Why has it stuck with you?

CHAPTER 32.

ANTIRACIST AND INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY RESOURCES

Our writing classes teach argumentative modes, academic discourse, and language standards often associated with whiteness, power, and the disenfranchisement of linguistic practices outside of standard written English. Perhaps the dominance of whiteness in writing instruction is represented clearly enough by the fact that the majority of authors appearing in this text are white and that this text refers mostly to Western rhetorical traditions.

While we're working with a limited number of resources that are open source to make this textbook free for students, we also don't want to reproduce linguistic injustice by reaffirming white discursive modes as the only standard our students can or should adhere to. We offer this appendix to guide instructors in considering how our teaching may implicitly or explicitly exclude some students. These materials present a set of starting points to explore inclusive and antiracist teaching practices.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Antiractist Pedagogy Guide from USC Libraries

Antiracist Pedagogy Guide from USC Libraries

This libguide provides a rich set of resources for examining whiteness, confronting systemic oppression, and starting conversations about race and racism in the classroom. This set of resources may be best suited for teachers looking to deepen their own understanding of systemic racism and whiteness or seeking texts that lead students toward examination of racism and white supremacy, though it also includes a set of toolkits aimed at syllabus and curriculum design.

Antiracist Teaching Resources/Readings

Antiracist Teaching Resources/Readings

This enormous list of resources compiled by Megan McIntyre at Sonoma State University contains a helpful mix of theoretical and practical resources for digging into antiracist pedagogy. The sections "Thinking about Language" and "Whiteness and Teaching" may work particularly well for students and teachers new to antiracist work.

Appendix: Alternatives to Traditional Grading

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Please see the appendix to this textbook for a primer on alternative grading models. This resource includes information about the biased nature of grades, the impact of traditional grading on student learning, and some starting points for moving away from traditional grading.

Black Language Syllabus

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Curated by coeditors April Baker-Bell and Carmen Kynard, this website advanced Black linguistic justice by providing materials centered on Black rhetorics. From podcasts to TED talks to a list of "Black language homework" on understanding the origin of Black linguistic practices, this website presents a wide array of content for teachers who want to learn more about how teaching standard English can invalidate or erase the language practices of Black students.

Caring for Students Playbook

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This resource details strategies for accessible and inclusive course design. It builds from approaches in culturally responsive teaching and universal design for learning to optimize course content to include all students.

Implicit Bias Modules Series

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From the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State, this series of modules provides a primer on implicit bias and would be well suited for instructors or students who want to learn more about how implicit bias functions in the brain and how it manifests itself in educational settings. This leads learners to take an Implicit Association Test from Project Implicit at Harvard.

Practicing Anti-racist Pedagogy

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Courtesy of the Inclusive Teaching Center at the University of Michigan, this resource site contains many concrete resources for implementing antiracist pedagogy. It also makes important distinctions between antiracist pedagogy and inclusive teaching more broadly and establishes some key principles for antiracist teaching.

Students' Right to Their Own Language

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This foundational statement from College Composition and Communication in 1974 remains central to linguistic justice in writing classrooms. It's a great starting point for thinking about what instructors of writing or English value in our teaching, and it can serve as a conversation starter in writing classrooms as well.

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VERSIONING

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