THE ASK: A MORE BEAUTIFUL QUESTION, 2ND EDITION

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Murfreesboro

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

"Always the beautiful answer who asks a more beautiful question."
-e.e. cummings, 1938

We read e.e. cummings as suggesting that being a person who asks questions opens us to a world of interesting experiences and the possibility of beautiful answers. We hope that this book will help you focus on questions rather than answers.

This book, *The Ask: A More Beautiful Question*, is an Open Educational Resource (OER), open access, freely available textbook. We appreciate the opportunities that OER invites – to work with multiple authors, to create instantly accessible texts, to offer high-quality, low-cost books to students and faculty excited about research and writing. But OERs are also weird. It takes an extraordinary amount of time, effort, and resources, to ensure the quality of OER texts. The labor of publication is often invisible in final textual products, but we appreciate how OER work sheds light on this collaborative, complicated process.

This second edition of *The Ask: A More Beautiful Question* builds on the work of our colleagues, offering a new organization that mirrors MTSU's ENGL 1020 curriculum, enhanced accessibility, new readings, and revised course objectives in line with the True Blue Core. We encourage you to also check out *The Muse: Misunderstandings and Their Remedies,* the text designed for MTSU's ENGL 1010 course; *The GEM: The Gen Ed Magazine*, which features award-winning student work composed in True Blue Core English courses; and the *Gen Ed English Faculty Guide*, which offers teaching materials aligned with the True Blue Core English curriculum.

GETTING STARTED WITH THIS TEXTBOOK

Welcome to ENGL 1020: Research & Argumentative Writing!

This is an open access, Creative Commons licensed textbook. Because this book functions differently than a print text, we encourage you to take a moment to familiarize yourself with the functionality. In developing this text, we focused on keeping it low cost and accessible, so choose the method of access – whether that means printing out a copy, or reading it on a digital device – that meets your needs most effectively.

The way to navigate this textbook on the Pressbooks platform is by using the "Content" drop-down menus on the left side of the screen. Also, you can "turn pages" by using the "Next" and "Previous" buttons on the bottom of your screen. The text is divided into sections that address Introduction to Research and Argumentative Writing, Research Processes, Working With Sources, Rhetoric & Argumentation, Remediation and Delivery, Reflection, and an Appendix that addresses citation and style concerns related to the research process.

Within each section are chapters that we think you'll find both useful and engaging to read. The readings in this text come from:

- *1st Edition: A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing* by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License
- Try *This: Research Methods For Writers* by Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 International License
- *Writing Spaces* edited by Dana Driscoll, Mary K. Stewart, and Matthew Vetter
- *Writing Commons* created and edited by Joseph Moxley
- *Bad Ideas About Writing Podcast* by Kyle Stedman
- *Bad Ideas About Writing* edited by Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Loewe licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

When the chapter derives from one of these peer-reviewed texts, we include an abstract at the top, a link to the original source, keywords, and author bio(s). If these components are not visible in the chapter, then it either derives from Gagich and Zickel's *1st Edition: A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing,* the book that we cloned to create *The Ask,* or we've authored original text.

If you'd like a print version of this textbook, we invite you to download a PDF version (see front cover).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND AUTHORSHIP

This book is a remix/mash-up of some of the best open access and Creative Commons licensed texts, and it is written by dozens of composition scholars. The first edition was curated by Harlow Crandall, Madonna Fajardo Kemp, Kate Pantelides, Erica Stone, Lisa E. Williams, and Elizabeth Williams, with generous support from the MTSU Provost's Office and the Tennessee Board of Regents. This second edition is edited by Nicholas Krause, Caroline LaPlue, and Kate Pantelides. We wish to extend our sincerest gratitude to all contributors, curators, and donors.

We are particularly indebted to Melangie Gagich and Emilie Zickel because, although we did not use all of their text, we cloned the first edition of their book, *A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing*, as a method of invention for our own. We would highly recommend this process for others who may want to develop an OER. When Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel decided to combine their individual textbooks into the source that is the parent for this one, they created a text

that functions less like a formal textbook and more like a manual or guide. Their text is less prescriptive than traditional approaches and allows for the picking and choosing of appropriate content by instructors and by students. This approach resonated with us, and we are deeply appreciative of their work.

Author listings are alphabetical, with the exception of new content developed for this textbook. For new content, we alternate author order to demonstrate the equal nature of our collaboration. One of the central philosophies behind open educational resources is the need for and importance of collaboration, as well as the sharing and "remixing" of the best available content. Our text was not written by one or even two authors; rather, it is a collection of a diverse array of viewpoints and writing styles, which, to us, exemplifies one of the many ways that our book is different from a traditional, print, academic textbook. The inclusion of work by multiple authors can also provide a starting point for conversations in writing class about how writing "actually works" (Wardle and Downs). In sum, we envision this text as a collection that allows instructors and students to use it in any way that complements their local programs and classrooms.

About the Editors of the Second Edition

Nich Krause is an instructor and doctoral candidate at Middle Tennessee State University, where his research focuses on fat representation. His dissertation draws on the fields of feminist pragmatism and fat studies to interrogate how fat suits in Hollywood films perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce anti-fat, sexist, and racist ideologies. In the classroom, Nich is committed to inclusive and nontraditional pedagogy, fostering an environment where students are encouraged to experiment and get creative without the constraints of punitive grading systems.

Caroline LaPlue is an instructor and doctoral candidate at Middle Tennessee State University. Caroline's dissertation is a nontraditional, digital humanities project that will map George MacDonald's many Victorian connections; this digital network will help provide essential resources for future scholars (and anyone who's interested in MacDonald). Her dissertation also embodies her approach to education: make learning inclusive, accessible, and actually useful for a diverse range of people.

Kate Pantelides is a professor and Provost's Fellow at Middle Tennessee State University. She teaches writing, rhetoric, and research classes for undergraduate and graduate students. Her research addresses research methods, feminist rhetorics, and writing program administration. Dr. Pantelides' work has been published in *College Composition and Communication*, *Composition Studies*, *Computers and Composition: An International Journal*, and *Composition Forum*, among other venues.

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TRUE BLUE CORE OBJECTIVES

Program Outcomes and Learning Objectives are the foundation for the first-year writing sequence at MTSU (see figure 1). Our first-year writing courses have a rhetorical foundation that draws attention to the questions we should ask when **composing**, as well as the **conventions**, norms, and expectations of different **genres**. We approach learning about the writing process this way instead of trying to prepare you for each individual genre you will encounter in your academic and professional life because writing contexts are always changing! The genres you're writing in today will likely not be the ones most important to your careers, and you may be composing in totally different genres in the near future, but learning about the thinking, situations, processes, habits, and practices associated with effective writing will **transfer** to your future writing opportunities.

ENGL 1010: Expository Writing	First-Year Writing Objectives	ENGL 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing
Compose writing tasks that demonstrate understanding of the rhetorical situation	**Rhetorical Knowledge**	**Practice** flexibility and awareness of effective delivery across different audiences, contexts, and genres
Revise writing assignments based on iterative feedback and make appropriate decisions about content, form, and presentation	**Composing Processes**	**Conduct** secondary research that relies on recursive relationships between reading, writing, and reflection
Demonstrate understanding of ethical primary research practices	**Genre Conventions**	**Locate** sources and analyze their relevance and credibility
Practice genre analysis of various types of text—print, digital, and audio	**Information Literacy**	**Demonstrate** rhetorical understanding of source attribution
Examine multimodal literacies across contexts, cultures, and communities, including academic disciplines and public audiences	**Reading Processes**	**Interpret** and respond to complex ideas in secondary sources
Reflect on literacy in student lives and across learning experiences	**Integrative Thinking**	**Identify** connections between coursework and other academic and external contexts

Figure 1. MTSU True Blue Core Course Outcomes

First-Year Writing at MTSU

The First-Year Writing sequence includes **ENGL 1010: Expository Writing** and **ENGL 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing**. ENGL 1020 builds on the knowledge and skills students hone in ENGL 1010. Figure 1 (above) demonstrates the ways that the two classes build on each other, meeting the required True Blue Core Outcomes of Written Communication and Information Literacy. The objectives for each class are further detailed below.

ENGL 1010 True Blue Course Objectives

- **Examine** multimodal literacies across contexts, cultures, and communities, including academic disciplines and public audiences (Reading Processes)
- **Reflect** on literacy in student lives and across learning experiences (Integrative Thinking)
- **Compose** writing tasks that demonstrate understanding of the rhetorical situation (Rhetorical Knowledge)
- **Revise** writing assignments based on iterative feedback and make appropriate decisions about content, form, and presentation (Composing Processes)
- **Demonstrate** understanding of ethical primary research practices (Genre Conventions)
- **Practice** genre analysis of various types of text—print, digital, and audio (Information Literacy)

ENGL 1020 True Blue Course Objectives

- **Conduct** secondary research that relies on recursive relationships between reading, writing, and reflection (Composing Processes)
- **Practice** flexibility and awareness of effective delivery across different audiences, contexts, and genres (Rhetorical Knowledge)
- **Locate** sources and analyze their relevance and

credibility (Genre Conventions)

- **Demonstrate** rhetorical understanding of source attribution (Information Literacy)
- **Interpret** and respond to complex ideas in secondary sources (Reading Processes)
- **Identify** connections between coursework and other academic and external contexts (Integrative Thinking)

Our focus in this book is on ENGL 1020, Research and Argumentative Writing, which teaches the skills that constitute Information Literacy: writing and analyzing arguments, research processes, as well as locating, organizing, and using library resource materials. According to the True Blue Core, “Information literacy is the ability to know when there is a need for information and to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. Information literacy assumes a broad definition of information, including but not limited to print, digital, media, technology, scientific, artistic, and other types of information.” ENGL 1020 builds on ENGL 1010’s rhetorical focus and primary research opportunities, inviting students to see themselves as knowledge creators participating in important and exciting research. Students spend the semester developing a research project, targeting an appropriate venue for their research, modeling attendant genre conventions, and sharing their research with colleagues.

TEACHING WITH THE ASK

Whether you're new to teaching the course or have years of experience, this guide offers suggestions for using the textbook effectively in your classroom.

Using Section Landing Pages in *The Ask*

Each section of *The Ask* begins with a short introduction page that can be assigned to students as reading, used for in-class discussion, or adapted into a class activity. These landing pages help frame key concepts and signal how the section's chapters work together to support student learning.

We recommend reading these landing pages together with students, especially early in the semester, to:

- Set the tone for inquiry-based learning;
- Highlight the book's emphasis on process over product;
- Encourage metacognition by inviting students to reflect on their existing assumptions about writing and research.

Landing pages also serve as helpful prompts for journaling, interactive digital activities, or small-group discussion. For example, the "Research Processes" section opens with the question *"What comes to mind when you hear the word 'Research'?"*—a great entry point for surfacing and addressing student concerns and misconceptions.

- Consider assigning individual landing pages as "preview readings" before students dive into the full chapters.

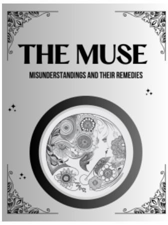
- Use landing pages to help students anticipate the goals of the section and build schema for what they're about to learn.

- Invite students to revisit the landing page at the end of the section to reflect on what has changed in their thinking.

Companion Resources

We recommend instructors explore the following companion resources, all of which are openly licensed and developed for use in MTSU's first-year writing sequence:

The Muse: Misunderstandings and Their Remedies



Designed for ENGL 1010, this companion text helps students confront and challenge common misconceptions about writing, building a foundation for rhetorical thinking and genre awareness.

The GEM: The Gen Ed Magazine

The GEM showcases award-winning student writing from across True Blue Core English courses. It's a valuable resource for modeling strong, diverse student work and for encouraging metacognitive reflection.

The Gen Ed English Faculty Guide

This guide provides lesson ideas, sample assignments, assessment tools, and other teaching materials to help instructors align their pedagogy with the True Blue Core outcomes.

Assignment and Pedagogy Resources

Writing Spaces Assignment Archive offers specific assignments for the classroom, rooted in best practices.

Better Practices: Exploring the Teaching of Writing in Online and Hybrid Spaces provides specific, classroom guidance on a range of topics, from grading to peer review to online engagement.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH AND ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Writing at Middle Tennessee State University

This course textbook is an Open Educational Resource (OER) designed to be accessible to students and faculty and to reduce the overall cost of course materials. Created through the generous backing of the MTSU Provost's Office, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the MTSU Library, this open educational resource (OER) is tailored to the unique context of writing at MTSU. Inside, you'll find peer-reviewed essays that explore key aspects of the writing process, along with campus-specific guidance. Paired with the GenEd Magazine (GEM), this resource is here to help you grow as a reader, writer, and thinker throughout your journey in ENGL 1020.

We're glad you're taking the second course in our first-year writing (FYW) sequence! In this section of our open-access textbook, you'll find the following chapters focused on university resources, First-Year Writing at MTSU, Campus Support Services, and the University Writing Center. The final two chapters in the section offer an orientation toward the class based in curiosity and questioning, Bad Idea About Writing: "Good Writers Always Follow My Rules," and ways to think about approaching each assignment, "So You've Got a Writing Assignment. Now What?

1.

FIRST-YEAR WRITING AT MTSU

Erica M. Stone and Kate L. Pantelides

On behalf of the English Department at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), **WELCOME to English 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing**! MTSU's two-semester, first-year writing sequence (see Figure 1) is designed to support your growth as a reader, writer, and communicator. This course textbook includes specific information about writing at MTSU as well as peer-reviewed articles about the writing process. Along with the GenEd Magazine (GEM), this OER will support your reading, writing, and thinking in ENGL 1020.

Figure 1: MTSU FYW Course Sequence

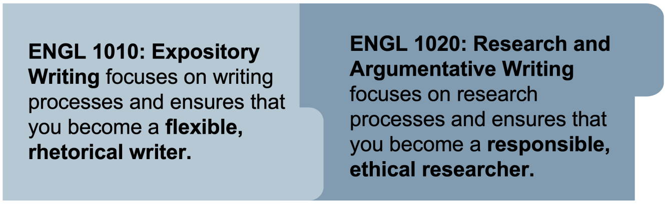


Figure 1: Defining statements for MTSU FYW Course Sequence

Writing in ENGL 1020

In **ENGL 1010: Expository Writing**, you practiced primary research and writing in different genres or writing situations, while also being invited to consider each rhetorical situation or the context in which writing develops. **ENGL 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing** focuses on information literacy and its relationship to research and argumentation, and it builds on what you learned in ENGL 1010: Expository Writing. Your understanding of genre, your ability to read and write rhetorically, and your grasp of rhetorical situations will be invaluable for your success in ENGL 1020. You will find yourself drawing on these crucial lessons from ENGL 1010 as you navigate the challenges of ENGL 1020: practicing rhetorical analysis, performing secondary research, choosing and composing in an appropriate genre in which to share your research, critically reading and analyzing sources, building your understanding of rhetorical timeliness and delivery, and experimenting with and integrating new types of knowledge in your writing.

Additionally, English 1020 allows for a more intense focus on the invention process, what some call prewriting or brainstorming. Invention is a rhetorical term for the writing you compose and the thinking you do do in service of developing compositions. As you begin English 1020, consider: What interests you? What research topics and questions do you want to pursue? What do you want to take away from this course?

Writing with a Growth Mindset

Writing with a growth mindset (i.e. seeing challenges as an opportunity for growth instead of failure) is imperative to your success in ENGL 1020. The key is to become flexible and mindful about writing situations and how effective writing changes, depending on the context. In ENGL 1020 you will consider how better understanding the writing and research process can help you transfer your learning to other academic, professional, civic, public, and community writing situations (see Figure 2).

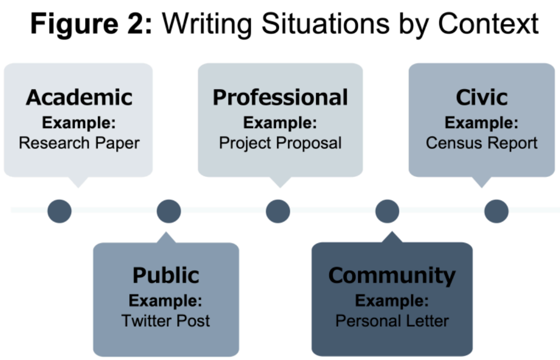


Figure 2: Writing Situations by Context — Academic Example: Research Paper; Professional Example: Project Proposal; Civic Example: Census Report; Public Example: Twitter Post; Community Example: Personal Letter

In the broadest sense, learning how to approach writing situations effectively and how to make the most of our writing experiences is the purpose of the MTSU writing course sequence. One of the most important keys for success in ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020—as well as for your development as a writer outside of the classroom—is to adopt a growth mindset by grappling with areas of difficulty instead of turning away from challenges. English Studies scholar Kelly Gallagher believes that exploring confusion by determining what accounts for it and discerning how to work through it is what leads to learning. Ultimately, what sets successful readers and writers apart is not an innate ability, but rather the willingness to acknowledge confusion and persevere until an understanding is reached. During your writing and research experiences in ENGL 1020, we encourage you to be open to new ideas and to experiment with your writing. You might be surprised to learn how much you can accomplish and how well you can write when you push yourself to work hard and use the resources designed to support your growth.

Considering the English Major or Minor

You may be wondering if an English major or minor, or a Public Writing and Rhetoric major or minor is right for you. If you enjoy ENGL 1010 and 1020 and think that you might want more, there are lots of reasons to pursue a major or minor in English, and there are lots of empirical studies that prove that a major in the liberal arts paves the way for success after graduation (Moody). In general, employers are less concerned with specific majors and more interested in an individual's ability to make independent decisions and communicate effectively. By exploring avenues of inquiry that support their growth as readers, writers, and thinkers, English majors develop their abilities to compete in a market that is, as scholars such as Deborah Brandt remind us, characterized by changing workplace realities.

The English Major Experience

- The major consists of 30 – 36 hours out of the 120 required for graduation. Students have more than 100 courses in the English department from which to choose.
- Upon declaring English as their major, students are matched with a faculty advisor with whom they work closely throughout their tenure as

MTSU students.

- English classes are small (15 – 25 seats), so students and teachers get to know each other and can work collaboratively.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in seminars, lectures, internships, study abroad offerings, and online classes.
- Students study more than words on a page. English majors are invited to read and respond to diverse texts, films, images, and audio recordings.
- Peck Hall, the English department home, is located on the historic side of campus, and students often carry conversations from the classroom out into the shade of Walnut Grove.

2.

CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES

Kate L. Pantelides and Erica M. Stone

Locating and using university resources will help you be successful in ENGL 1020 and other courses at MTSU. As a part-time or full-time student, you pay tuition and fees each semester to access each of the resources listed, described, and linked below. We encourage you to use this list as a menu for troubleshooting issues, accessing technology, and answering questions throughout your degree program.

Academic Calendar: This link includes important dates to know for registration, holidays, adding/dropping/withdrawing classes, and graduation.

Final Exam Schedule: Final exams often occur outside of normal class times. Use this website to find your final exam time(s).

Withdrawal Info: Remember that withdrawing from courses can impact financial aid, housing, meal plans, and future academic plans. Consult with your advisor before deciding to withdraw.

Library Resources: Walker Library provides free access to books, research databases, study spaces, and one-on-one help from librarians.

Tutoring Services: Tutoring is available in over 200 courses in subjects such as English, biology, math, and many more.

Healthcare Resources: Student Health Services is open Monday – Friday, and you can call their nurse after hours.

Mental Health Resources: Counseling Services offers free and low-cost services to students, as well as numerous other resources.

Career Resources: The Career Development Center is a place to visit throughout your time at MTSU. They can provide assistance with finding summer jobs and internships, as well as how to find the right job post-graduation.

3.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Erica M. Stone and Kate L. Pantelides

The **Margaret H. Ordoubadian University Writing Center at MTSU** supports all levels of writers in all disciplines at any stage of the writing process for any kind of written project or assignment including multimedia projects. The Writing Center offers 45-minute sessions face-to-face or online as well as group sessions and long-term writing partnerships.

To schedule an appointment, access their online portal WCONLINE. Contact them at uwcenter@mtsu.edu or 615-904-8237 with any questions.

Also, check out the links below for more information.

UWC Homepage & Info

The UWC homepage provides an introduction to the Writing Center, hours of operation, and an overview of offerings. Link to UWC homepage on the MTSU website.

Schedule an Appointment

To schedule an appointment with a writing consultant, follow the posted directions on the appointment webpage. Link to appointment webpage.

Online Writing Resources

The UWC maintains online resources for writers who wish to work independently on writing tasks. Link to Online Writing Resources..

Weekly Writing Groups

The UWC hosts weekly writing groups that focus on creative writing, professional writing, and more. Link to Weekly Writing Groups.

Workshops & Events

The UWC holds workshops and events each semester. Link to the schedule and descriptions.

4.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "GOOD WRITERS ALWAYS FOLLOW MY RULES"

Monique Dufour and Jennifer Ahern-Dodson

Abstract

Monique Dufour and Jennifer Ahern-Dodson's essay, "Good Writers Always Follow My Rules," is from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing*. This essay, like the whole book, dispels myths about writing. They address how "rules" about writing are really rhetorical techniques that are applicable in some situations but not others. In their conclusion, they remind us that they "are not suggesting

that there are no rules and that rules don't matter." Instead, Dufour and Ahern-Dodson want us to remember that developing writing skills is dependent on awareness of the situation in which writing takes place.

This reading is available below and as a PDF, or listen to Kyle Stedman's audio version of this text.

What is good writing? And how does good writing get written? In the first question, writing is a noun—a product made of elements such as words, sentences, and paragraphs. In the second question, writing is a verb—a process by which we create these texts.

Wisdom about writing—as a product and as a process—is often expressed as hard and fast rules. Always begin an essay with a catchy hook. Never use the passive voice. Always make your writing flow. Always make a detailed outline before you start to write. Never edit as you draft.

People espouse unambiguous rules about writing for many good reasons. Writing is a notoriously challenging, complex, even mysterious skill; nevertheless, we are expected to learn it and to do it well throughout our lives. And there is often much at stake when we write. We create texts to persuade others about all manner of significant things: the best course of action, our qualifications for a job, the quality of our ideas, and even the content of our characters. Do we seem smart and capable? Are our claims true and fair? Will things turn out as we wish? With these questions at stake, why wouldn't we want to discover and use foolproof writing techniques? Adhering to clear-cut do's and don'ts could cut through the ambiguity and difficulty of writing, and of making judgments about the quality of texts. So let's identify the rules for good writing, state them unequivocally, and learn to write effectively for once and for all.

The trouble is: An unwavering rule-driven approach to writing often causes more difficulties than it solves. First, there is an important distinction between rules and techniques. Simply put, techniques are ways of doing things. For instance, one can approach the writing process as a sequence of steps that should follow a strict order: Have and refine an idea, conduct all the research, write a complete draft from the beginning to the end, revise the draft, edit it, and let it go. The writer completes each step in the process before moving on to the next. (Writing assignments in school are commonly structured this way.) This linear approach to the writing process is a useful technique that works under many circumstances. But it's not the only way to approach the writing process, and it doesn't work especially well for some tasks. Still, for many writers, it has calcified into a hard and fast rule. This good option becomes the only option.

But good options may not work under every circumstance. Thus, when writers treat options as rules, writing can actually become more frustrating because the writer insists on abiding by the rule, *whether it works or not*. For example, that linear model of the writing process can be very effective—it might work for a writer for virtually every email, report, and research project she writes, year after year. Until it doesn't. Perhaps she's writing a long, complex project such as a dissertation or a book. Suddenly, she will likely need to revise her prose and her ideas, continue her research, and incorporate feedback throughout the process. She might write the introduction last. She may need to write parts without knowing where everything is leading. In short, she may need to abandon the belief that writing must proceed through clearly delineated, linear steps. It's not that the linear model of the writing process never works. The problem arises when a writer treats it as a rule. And it's especially frustrating because writers think they are being good and doing the right thing by following the rules, only to find that those rules more often impede their progress than enable it.

As writing consultants for faculty instructors, we have witnessed many smart, capable teachers who were *undermined* rather than helped by their own staunch rules about the writing process. They believed unequivocally that they could only write when they had big blocks of uninterrupted time. Or that they should never share unpolished, messy works-in-progress. Or that they could only work on one project at a time. Of course, most faculty writers simply don't routinely enjoy big blocks of uninterrupted time. They likely need to write in smaller windows of time—30 minutes here, an hour there—between their administrative, mentoring, and teaching responsibilities (not to mention their lives). They could learn to create time machines, or they could change their rules about the writing process and learn techniques that allow them to write in the time they have. Similarly, writers who refuse to share unpolished or partial works-in-progress for feedback from trusted readers often end up wasting their precious writing time in the effort to advance a project alone. We have seen faculty members end up feeling like bad writers in the midst of personal failure, when in fact they are simply making the mistake of treating a technique as a rule.

Rule-driven writing instruction may intend to make writing easier, but it often undermines the very skills it is designed to foster. For instance, many undergraduate writers have been taught that they must create a detailed outline for a research paper before they begin writing. And they are often told that a first draft of a research paper must be presented in polished, error-free prose, and that the draft must be complete, from beginning to end. In fact, we know many teachers who refuse outright to read messy or incomplete works-in-progress. So, students put extensive effort into planning just how the essay will proceed and what it will say before they write. And they spend time carefully polishing prose in a first draft. Of course, outlining can be a powerful conceptual and organizational tool. However, when writers believe that they must outline f irst, they often lock themselves into the ideas as expressed on the outline, rather than allowing their ideas to develop and change as they work. Writers who always create detailed outlines and who write very polished preliminary drafts also tend to resist revision, because they have already committed a great deal of upfront effort on their initial plans and prose. By treating the linear model of the writing process as a rule, teachers can create writers who don't want to and don't know how to revise as a powerful part of thinking and writing.

We propose another way. Think of good writing as the thoughtful use of an evolving repertoire, rather than adherence to a static list of commandments. In order to become a skillful writer, one discovers and experiments with a range of techniques. A writer draws upon this repertoire to meet the needs of the project, the ideas at hand, and the rhetorical situation. As one's repertoire grows, and as one becomes practiced in drawing upon it, one can grow more confident about overcoming difficulties, taking up challenges, and expressing one's ideas effectively. Ultimately, writers become skillful when they are willing to assess and reassess the quality of any idea about writing in terms of its effectiveness in their own experiences.

People will continue to present useful techniques as though they are divine laws. However, we suggest that writers mentally translate rules into suggestions and *what if* questions. Take, for example, the common advice to always begin an essay with a catchy hook. Catchy hooks such as apt, vivid anecdotes can be used to excellent effect, if they meet the needs of the text and the circumstances. A writer can try it out and see what happens. What effect does it have on the text? Does it meet the audience's and context's needs (i.e., the rhetorical situation)? Does it contribute to expressing what the writer is trying to say? How do real readers respond? In this way, writers can experiment with techniques, deliberate about their implications, and make judgments about the best course of action among their options. And, most importantly, writers focus their goals and purposes, rather than on the rote adherence to rules, which is more meaningful, and more fun.

To be clear: We are not suggesting that there are no rules and that rules don't matter. Without adherence to conventions of grammar and usage, for instance, many readers may misunderstand a writer's point or not take them seriously. However, writers are ultimately undermined by a thoroughgoing rule-bound mentality. First, if writing is simply a matter of following rules and plugging in formulas, it's boring to most people. Second, in writing, problems are normal. When we think of writing as an opportunity to use and develop our repertoires to make and express meaning, writers can define the problems and needs before them and draw on their resources to solve them with creativity and aplomb. Perhaps we don't have as much uninterrupted time to write as we once did. We cannot create more time where there is none, but we can learn to write in the time we have. Perhaps our longer, more complex ideas cannot be crammed into a five-paragraph theme. We can learn new ways of organizing an essay to express an ambiguous claim. We don't need to stop writing when the rules don't work. And, we don't need to read and judge one another's writing only in terms of our own strictures. When we acknowledge that many of our rules are in fact techniques, and when we understand that writing is the skillful use of evolving repertoires, we can focus on expressing ideas worth sharing and become the kind of readers and writers who are in a position to listen.

Keywords

good/effective writing, **prescriptive writing**, **style**, **writer's block**, **writing process**

Author Bios

Jennifer Ahern-Dodson teaches writing at Duke University, where she consults with faculty across the disciplines on ways to employ and assess writing in their own courses. She studies the relationship between writing and teaching and has been working with student, community, and faculty writers for more than 20 years. She is @jaherndodson on Twitter.

Monique Dufour is an assistant collegiate professor in the history department at Virginia Tech, where she teaches the history of medicine, the history of books and reading, and writing. She also directs the Medicine and Society minor. Before completing her PhD in science and technology studies, she was a faculty development consultant at Virginia Tech's Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. As a writer and cultural historian, she investigates scenes of encounter among medicine, science, and the humanities from the 20th century to the present. Her book manuscript, The Embodied Reader, is a history of bibliotherapy, the use and study of reading as a form of medical treatment and a path to health.

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "Good Writers Always Follow My Rules" by Monique Dufour and Jennifer Ahern-

5.

SO YOU'VE GOT A WRITING ASSIGNMENT. NOW WHAT?

Corrine E. Hinton

Abstract

Corrine E. Hinton's essay comes from the collection *Writing Spaces*. Hinton offers explicit discussion of how to approach a writing assignment. The abstract for the piece describes the purpose as the following: "Interpreting writing assignments can be a challenge for anyone. [...] This chapter gives students practical strategies for interpreting writing assignments, including how to identify

important rhetorical elements, how to calculate and respond to common expectations, and how to recognize and discuss specific points of confusion."

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

It's the first day of the semester and you've just stepped foot into your Intro to American Politics class. You grab a seat toward the back as the instructor enters, distributes the syllabus, and starts to discuss the course schedule. Just before class ends, she grabs a thin stack of papers from her desk and, distributing them, announces, "This is your first writing assignment for the term. It's due two weeks from Thursday, so I suggest you begin early." Your stomach clenches. For some people, a writing assignment causes a little nervous energy, but for you, it's a deep, vomit-inducing fireball that shoots down your body and out your toes. As soon as the assignment sheet hits your hands, your eyes dart wildly about, frantically trying to decipher what you're supposed to do. How many pages is this thing supposed to be? What am I supposed to write about? What's Chicago style? When is it due? You know your instructor is talking about the assignment right now, but her voice fades into a murmur as you busy yourself with the assignment sheet. The sound of shuffling feet interrupts your thoughts; you look up and realize she's dismissed the class. You shove the assignment into your bag, convinced you're doomed before you've even started.

So you've got a writing assignment. Now what? First, don't panic. Writing assignments make many of us nervous, but this anxiety is especially prevalent in first year students. When that first writing assignment comes along, fear, anxiety, avoidance, and even anger are typical responses. However, negative emotional reactions like these can cloud your ability to be rational, and interpreting a writing assignment is a rational activity and a skill. You can learn and cultivate this skill with practice. Why is learning how to do it so important?

First, you can learn how to manage negative emotional responses to writing. Research indicates emotional responses can affect academic performance "over and above the influence of cognitive ability or motivation" (Pekrun 129). So, even when you have the knowledge or desire to accomplish a particular goal, your fear, anxiety, or boredom can have greater control over how you perform. Anything you can do to minimize these reactions (and potentially boost performance) benefits your personal and intellectual wellness.

Learning to interpret writing assignment expectations also helps encourage productive dialogue between you and your fellow classmates and between you and your instructor. You'll be able to discuss the assignment critically with your peers, ask them specific questions about information you don't know, or compare approaches to essays. You'll also be able to answer your classmates' questions confidently. Many students are too afraid or intimidated to ask their instructors for help, but when you understand an instructor's expectations for an assignment, you also understand the skills being assessed. With this method, when you do not understand a requirement or expectation, you'll have more confidence to approach your instructor directly, using him as valuable resource that can encourage you, clarify confusion, or strengthen your understanding of course concepts.

What follows is a series of practical guidelines useful for interpreting most college writing assignments. In my experience, many students already know and employ many of these strategies regularly; however, few students know or use all of them every time. Along the way, I'll apply some of these guidelines to actual assignments used in university classrooms. You'll also be able to get into the heads of other students as they formulate their own approaches to some of these assignments.[1]

Guidelines for Interpreting Writing Assignments

Don't Panic and Don't Procrastinate

Writing assignments should not incite panic, but it happens. We've already discussed how panicking and other negative reactions work against you by clouding your ability to analyze a situation rationally. So when your instructor gives you that writing assignment, don't try to read the whole assignment sheet at breakneck speed. Instead, take a deep breath and focus. If your instructor talks about the assignment, stop what you're doing and listen. Often, teachers will read through the assignment aloud and may even elaborate on some of the requirements. Write down any extra information or advice your instructor provides about the requirements, his or

1. My thanks to Dr. Kenneth Locke from University of the West for contributing a sample assignment to this project and to the students who participated in this exercise; their interest, time, and enthusiasm helps bring a sense of realism to this essay, and I am indebted to them for their assistance.

her expectations, changes, possible approaches, or topic ideas. This information will be useful to you as you begin thinking about the topic and formulating your approach. Also, pay attention to your classmates' questions. You might not need those answers now, but you may find them helpful later.

If you're an undergraduate student taking more than one class, it's not uncommon to have several writing assignments due within days of each other. Hence, you should avoid procrastinating. People procrastinate for different reasons. Maybe you wait because you've always been able to put together a decent paper the night before it's due. Perhaps you wait because avoiding the assignment until the last minute is your response to academic stress. Waiting until the last minute to complete a writing assignment in college is a gamble. You put yourself at risk for the unexpected: your printer runs out of ink, your laptop crashes and you didn't backup your work, the Internet in the library is down, the books you need are checked out, you can't locate any recent research on your topic, you have a last-minute emergency, or you have a question about the assignment you can't find the answer to. The common result of situations like these is that if the student is able to complete the assignment, it is often a poor representation of her actual knowledge or abilities. Start your assignment as soon as possible and leave yourself plenty of time to plan for the unexpected.

Read the Assignment. Read It Again. Refer to It Often

The ability to read critically is a useful skill. When you read a textbook chapter for your history course, for example, you might skim it for major ideas first, re-read and then highlight or underline important items, make notes in the margins, look up unfamiliar terms, or compile a list of questions. These same strategies can be applied when reading writing assignments. The assignment sheet is full of material to be deciphered, so attack it the same way you would attack your history book. When Bailey[2], an undergraduate at a university in Los Angeles, was asked to respond to a biology writing assignment, here's what she had to say about where she would start:

> When getting a writing assignment, you should read it more than once just to get a knowledge of what they're [the instructors] really asking for and underline important information, which is what I'm doing now. Before starting the assignment, always write some notes down to help you get started.

Here are some other strategies to help you become an active, critical reader of writing assignments:

1. Start by skimming, noting anything in particular that jumps out at you.
2. As soon as you have the time and the ability to focus, re-read the assignment carefully. Underline or highlight important features of the assignment or criteria you think you might forget about after you've started writing.
3. Don't be afraid to write on the assignment sheet. Use the available white space to list

2. The names of student participants in this document have been changed to retain confidentiality.

questions, define key terms or concepts, or jot down any initial ideas you have. Don't let the margins confine your writing (or your thoughts). If you're running out of space, grab a fresh sheet of paper and keep writing. The sooner you starting thinking and writing about the assignment, the easier it may be to complete.

As you begin drafting, you should occasionally refer back to the official assignment sheet. Maintaining constant contact with your teacher's instructions will help keep you on the right track, may remind you of criteria you've forgotten, and it might even spark new ideas if you're stuck.

Know Your Purpose and Your Audience

Instructors give writing assignments so students can demonstrate their knowledge and/or their ability to apply knowledge. On the surface, it may seem like the instructor is simply asking you to answer some questions to demonstrate that you understand the material or to compare and contrast concepts, theorists, or approaches. However, assessing knowledge is usually just one reason for the assignment. More often than not, your instructor is also evaluating your ability to demonstrate other critical skills. For example, she might be trying to determine if you can apply a concept to a particular situation, if you know how to summarize complex material, or if you can think critically about an idea and then creatively apply that thinking to new situations. Maybe she's looking at how you manage large quantities of research or how you position expert opinions against one another. Or perhaps she wants to know if you can form and support a sound, credible argument rather than describing your opinion about a certain issue.

Instructors have different ways of conveying what they expect from their students in a writing assignment. Some detail explicitly what they intend to evaluate and may even provide a score sheet. Others may provide general (even vague) instructions and leave the rest up to you. So, what can you do to ensure you're on the right track? Keep reading through these guidelines, and you'll learn some ways to read between the lines. Once you identify all the intentions at work (that is, what your instructor is trying to measure), you'll be able to consider and address them.

Audience is a critical component to any writing assignment, and realistically, one or several different audiences may be involved when you're writing a paper in college. The person evaluating your essay is typically the audience most college students consider first. However, your instructor may identify a separate audience to whom you should tailor your response. Do not ignore this audience! If your business instructor tells you to write a research proposal that will be delivered to members of the local chamber of commerce, then adapt your response to them. If you're in an engineering course, and your instructor asks you to write a product design report about a piece of medical equipment geared toward medical practitioners (and not engineers), you should think differently about your terminology, use of background information, and what motivates this particular audience when they read your report. Analyzing the background (personal, educational, professional), existing knowledge, needs, and concerns of your audience will help you make more informed decisions about word choice, structure, tone, or other components of your paper.

Locate and Understand the Directive Verbs

One thing you should do when interpreting a writing assignment is to locate the directive verbs and know what the instructor means by them. Directive verbs tell you what you should do in order to formulate a written response. The following table lists common directive verbs used in writing assignments:

Table 1: Frequently used directive verbs.

- analyze
- defend
- illustrate
- apply
- describe
- investigate
- argue
- design
- narrate
- compare
- discuss
- show
- consider
- explain

- summarize
- contrast
- explore
- synthesize
- create
- evaluate
- trace

You might notice that many of the directive verbs have similar general meanings. For example, although explore and investigate are not necessarily synonyms for one another, when used in writing assignments, they may be asking for a similar structural response. Understanding what those verbs mean to you and to your instructor may be the most difficult part of understanding a writing assignment. Take a look at this sample writing assignment from a philosophy course:

Philosophy Writing Assignment*

"History is what the historian says it is." Discuss.

All papers are to be typed, spell-checked and grammar-checked. Responses should be 2000 words. They should be well-written, with a logical flow of thought, and double-spaced with 1″ margins on all sides. Papers should be typed in 12-pitch font, using Courier or Times Roman typeface. Indent the first line of each new paragraph five spaces. Also include the title page so that the instructor can identify the student, assignment, and course number.

Proper standard English is required. Do not use slang or a conversational style of writing. Always avoid contractions (e.g. "can't" for "cannot") in formal essays. Always write in complete sentences and paragraphs! Staple all papers in the upper left-hand corner and do not put them in a folder, binder, or plastic cover.

As written work, citations and bibliographies should conform to the rules of composition laid down in The Chicago Manual of Style (15th edition), or Charles Lipson's Doing Honest Work in College (chapter 5). A paper that lacks correct citations and/or a bibliography will receive an automatic 10% reduction in grade.

*Sample undergraduate philosophy writing assignment, courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Locke, Religious Studies Department, University of the West

You may interpret the word discuss in one way, while your instructor may have a different understanding. The key is to make certain that these two interpretations are as similar as possible. You can develop a mutual understanding of the assignment's directive verbs and calculate an effective response using the following steps:

1. Look up the verb in a dictionary and write down all of the definitions.
2. List all possible synonyms or related terms and look those up as well; then, see if any of these terms suggest a clearer interpretation of what the assignment is asking you to do.

3. Write down several methods you could use to approach the assignment. (Check out guideline eight in this essay for some common approaches.)
4. Consult with your instructor, but do not be discouraged if he/ she is unwilling to clarify or provide additional information; your interpretation of the directions and subsequent approach to fulfilling the assignment criteria may be one of its purposes.
5. Consult a trusted peer or writing center tutor for assistance.
6. Figure out what you know.

When deciphering an assignment's purpose is particularly challenging, make a list. Think about what you know, what you think you know, and what you do not know about what the assignment is asking you to do. Putting this list into a table makes the information easier to handle. For example, if you were given an assignment that asked you to analyze presentations in your business ethics class, like the assignment in Figure 2, your table might look like Table 2 below:

Business Writing Assignment Presentation Analysis
During three weeks of class, you'll observe several small group presentations on business ethics given by your fellow

classmates. Choose two of the presentations and write a short paper analyzing them. For each presentation, be sure to do the following:

1. In one paragraph, concisely summarize the group's main conclusions
2. Analyze the presentation by answering any two of the following three:
    - With which of the group's conclusions do you agree? Why? With which of the conclusions do you disagree? Why? (include specific examples of both)
    - What particular issue of ethics did the group not address or only address slightly? Analyze this aspect from your perspective.
    - In what way could you apply one or more of the group's conclusions to a particular situation? (The situation could be hypothetical, one from your personal or professional experience, or a real-world example). The paper should be no more than 3 pages in length with 12-pt font, 1 ½ line spacing. It is due one week after the conclusion of presentations.

Your grade will depend upon

1. the critical thought and analytical skills displayed in the paper;

2. your use of ethical principles from chapter 7 of our textbook;
3. the professionalism, correctness, and logic of your writing.

Table 2. Sample knowledge table for undergraduate business writing assignment.

What I Know	What I Think I Know	What I Don't Know
Need to observe and take notes on 2 presentations	Concisely means "short," so my summaries should be shorter than the other parts of the paper.	What does the professor mean by "critical thought"?
Need to summarize each groups' conclusions	I think I need to apply my own understanding of ethics to figure out which issue the group didn't address	How does the professor evaluate "professionalism"? How do I demonstrate this?
2–3 pages long; 12 pt font and 1 ½ spacing	I think I understand everything from chapter 7	Do I need to apply both groups' conclusions to the same situation or to two different ones?
Need to include personal opinion	I think it's okay to say "I" in the paper.	How much personal opinion should I include and do I need specific examples to support my opinion?
Need to answer 2 of the 3 questions under part 2	I don't think I need an introduction.	Should I separate my essay into two parts, one for each group I observed?

After reviewing the table, you can see that this student has a lot of thoughts about this assignment. He understands some of the general features. However, there are some critical elements that need clarification before he submits the assignment. For instance, he's unsure about the best structure for the paper and the way it should sound. Dividing your understanding of an assignment into a table or list can help you identify the confusing parts. Then, you can formulate specific questions that your instructor or a writing center consultant can help you answer.

Ask Yourself: Do I Need an Argument?

Perhaps one of the most important things to know is whether or not your instructor is asking you to formulate and support an argument. Sometimes this is easy to determine. For example, an assignment many instructors include in their courses is a persuasive paper where you're typically asked to choose an issue, take a position, and then support it using evidence. For many students, a persuasive paper is a well known assignment, but when less familiar assignment genres come up, some students may be confused about argument expectations. This confusion may arise because the instructor uses a directive verb that is easily misinterpreted. What about the verb explain? Does it make you think of words like summarize, review, or describe (which would suggest more facts and less opinion)? Or, do you associate it with words like debate, investigate, or defend (which imply the need for a well-supported argument)? You can also look for other clues in the assignment indicating a need for evidence. If your instructor mentions scholarly citations, you'll probably need it. If you need evidence, you'll probably need an argument. Still confused? Talk to your instructor.

Consider the Evidence

If your assignment mentions a minimum number of required sources, references a particular citation style, or suggests scholarly journals to review during your research, then these are telltale signs that you'll need to find and use evidence. What qualifies as evidence? Let's review some of the major types:

- Personal experience
- Narrative examples (historical or hypothetical)
- Statistics (or numerical forms of data) and facts
- Graphs, charts, or other visual representatives of data
- Expert opinion
- Research results (experimental or descriptive)

Each of these offers benefits and drawbacks when used to support an argument. Consider this writing assignment from a 200-level biology class on genetics:

Biology Writing Assignment

Genes & Gene Research Purpose:

> This writing assignment will ask you to familiarize yourself with genes, the techniques gene researchers use when working with genes, and the current research programs investigating genes. The report is worth 10% of your final grade in the course.
>
> In a research report of at least 1500 words, you should address the following:
>
> 1. Generally, what is a gene and what does it do? Create a universally applicable definition for a gene.
> 2. Choose a specific gene and apply your definition to it (i.e., what does this particular gene do and how does it work?)
> 3. Recreate the history of the gene you've chosen including the gene's discovery (and discoverer), the motivation behind the research into this gene, outcomes of the research, and any medical, social, historical, or biological implications to its discovery.
> 4. Explore the current research available on your gene. Who is conducting the research, what are the goals (big/small; longterm/short-term) of the research, and how is the research being funded?
>
> Research should be properly documented using CSE (Council of Science Editors) style.
>
> The report should be typewritten, double spaced, in a font of reasonable size.

This instructor asks students to demonstrate several skills, including definition, summary, research, and application. Nearly all of these components should include some evidence, specifically scientific research studies on the particular gene the student has chosen. After reading it, here's what Bailey said about how she would start the assignment: "This assignment basically has to do with who you are, so it should be something simple to answer, not too difficult since you should know yourself." Ernest, another student, explains how he would approach the same assignment: "So, first of all, to do this assignment, I would go on the computer, like on the Internet, and I would . . . do research about genes first. And . . . everything about them, and then I would . . . start with the first question, second question, third and fourth, and that's it." For Bailey, using her own life as an example to illustrate genetic inheritance would be the best way to start responding to the assignment. Ernest, on the other hand, thinks a bit differently; he knows he needs "research about genes" to get started, and, like many students, figures the internet will tell him everything he needs to know. So, how do you know what evidence works best? Know the field you're writing in: what type(s) of evidence it values, why it's valuable, and what sources provide that evidence. Some other important questions you should ask yourself include

- Where, in the paper, is the most effective place for this evidence?
- What type of evidence would support my argument effectively?
- What kind of evidence would most convince my

audience?

- What's the best way to integrate this evidence into my ideas?
- What reference/citation style does this discipline use?

If your writing assignment calls for evidence, it is important that you answer these questions. Failure to do so could cost you major points—in your assignment and with your instructor.

Calculate the Best Approach

When you decide how to approach your paper, you're also outlining its basic structure. Structure is the way you construct your ideas and move from one idea to the next. Typical structural approaches include question/answer, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, methodology, cause/effect, narration/reflection, description/illustration, classification/division, thesis/support, analysis/synthesis, and theory/ application. These patterns can be used individually or in combination with each other to illustrate more complex relationships among ideas. Learning what structures are useful in particular writing situations starts with reviewing the assignment. Sometimes, the instructor clearly details how you should structure your essay. On the other hand, the assignment may suggest a particular structural pattern but may not actually reflect what the instructor expects to see. For example, if the prompt asks four questions, does that mean you're supposed to write a paragraph for each answer and then slap on an introduction and a conclusion? Not necessarily. Consider what structure would deliver your message accurately and effectively.

Knowing what structures are acceptable within the discipline is also important. Many students are uncomfortable with rigidity; they wonder why their chemistry lab reports must be presented "just so." Think about the last time you looked at a restaurant menu. If you're looking for appetizers, those items are usually listed at the front of the menu whereas desserts are closer to the back. If a restaurant menu listed the desserts up front, you might find the design unfamiliar and the menu difficult to navigate. The same can be said for formalized writing structures including lab reports or literature reviews, for example. Examining scholarly publications (journal articles or books) within that field will help you identify commonly used structural patterns and understand why those structures are acceptable within the discipline.

Understand and Adhere to Formatting and Style Guidelines

Writing assignments usually provide guidelines regarding format and/ or style. Requirements like word count or page length, font type or size, margins, line spacing, and citation styles fall into this category. Most instructors have clear expectations for how an assignment should look based on official academic styles, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), or the Council of Science Editors (CSE). If your instructor specifically references a style then locate a copy of the manual, so you'll know how to cite source material and how to develop your document's format (font, spacing, margin size, etc.) and style (use of headings, abbreviations, capitalization). Occasionally, an instructor may modify a standard style to meet her personal preferences. Follow any additional formatting or style guidelines your instructor provides. If you don't, you could lose points unnecessarily. They may also refer you to scholarly journals to use as models. Don't ignore these! Not only will you be able to review professional examples of the kinds of work you're doing (like lab reports, lit reviews, research reports, executive summaries, etc.), you'll also learn more about what style of writing a discipline values.

Identify Your Available Resources and Ask Questions

Even after following these steps, you may still have questions. When that happens, you should know who your resources are and what they do (and don't do). After Nicole read the business ethics assignment (provided earlier in this chapter), she said, "I would send a draft to [the instructor] and ask him if he could see if I'm on the right track." Nicole's instincts are right on target; your primary resource is your instructor. Professors may appear intimidating, but they are there to help. They can answer questions and may even offer research recommendations. If you ask ahead of time, many are also willing to review a draft of your project and provide feedback. However, don't expect your teacher to proofread your paper or give you the "right" answer. Writing assignments are one method by which instructors examine your decision making, problem solving, or critical thinking skills.

The library is another key resource. Reference librarians can help you develop an effective research process by teaching you how to use the catalog for books or general references, how to search the databases, and how to use library equipment (copy machines, microfiche, scanners, etc.). They will not choose your topic or conduct your research for you. Spending some time learning from a reference librarian is worthwhile; it will make you a more efficient and more effective student researcher, saving you time and frustration.

Many institutions have student support centers for writing and are especially useful for first year students. The staff is an excellent source of knowledge about academic expectations in college, about research and style, and about writing assignment interpretation. If you're having trouble understanding your assignment, go to the writing center for help. If you're working on a draft and you want to review it with someone, they can take a look. Your writing center tutor will not write your paper for you, nor will he serve as an editor to correct grammar mistakes. When you visit your university's writing center, you'll be able to discuss your project with an experienced tutor who can offer practical advice in a comfortable learning environment.

The above are excellent resources for student assistance. Your instructor, the librarians, and the writing center staff will not do the work for you. Instead, they'll teach you how to help yourself. The guidelines I've outlined here are meant to do exactly the same. So the next time you've got a writing assignment, what will you do?

Discussion

1. Think about a previous writing assignment that was a challenge for you. What strategies did you use at the time? After reading the chapter, what other strategies do you think might have been useful?
2. Choose two verbs from the list of frequently used directive verbs (Table 1). Look up these verbs (and possible synonyms) in the dictionary and write down their definitions. If you saw these verbs in a writing assignment, what potential questions might you ask your professor in order to clarify what he/she means?
3. Choose two of the sample assignments from the chapter and create a chart similar to Table 2 for each assignment. What differences do you notice? If these were your assignments, what evidence do you think would best support your argument and why (review guideline seven for help)?
4. What advice would you give to first year college students about writing, writing assignments, or instructor expectations? Structure this advice in the form of a guideline similar to those included in the chapter.

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Attributions

6.

A.I. IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Nich Krause; Caroline LaPlue; Kate L. Pantelides; and Melissa LaDuc

Understanding A.I. in the Classroom

What Is A.I.?

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) is a term you've probably heard a lot lately, especially since tools like ChatGPT have become widely available. But A.I. isn't brand new. It's been around in various forms for decades. Spell checkers, search engines, and even Netflix recommendations all rely on forms of A.I.

Today, most of the buzz is about a specific kind of A.I. called Generative A.I., or GenAI. These are programs that can create new content based on prompts from users. This includes tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini. These tools are powered by something called a Large Language Model (LLM). LLMs are trained on huge amounts of text—books, websites, articles, and more. They use patterns in language to “guess” the most likely next word in a sentence, kind of like a very advanced autocomplete. They don’t think, feel, or understand context like people do. They just predict words based on patterns in their training data.

That makes LLMs really good at generating text that sounds human, but it doesn’t mean they know what they’re saying. This difference matters a lot when we start using A.I. tools in our writing and thinking processes.

Haven’t We Been Here Before?

Kind of. Every time a new writing technology comes along, *people worry*. When pencils were introduced, some educators thought students would forget how to memorize. Scholar Denis Baron writes about this in his book *A Better Pencil*, showing that even “ordinary” tools like typewriters and spellcheckers sparked fears about cheating and laziness. He offers a useful historical perspective, reminding us that writing itself is a technology.

Just like those earlier tools, GenAI raises new questions. But the scale and speed of these technologies are unprecedented.

Why Are People Excited—and Why Are Others Worried?

People are excited about GenAI because it can:

- Help brainstorm and organize ideas
- Rewrite or rephrase confusing writing
- Summarize or simplify complex sources
- Speed up certain types of research or editing
- Solve complex mathematical equations
- Assist with previously time-consuming coding projects
- Analyze large datasets

At the same time, people are worried because:

- GenAI can sometimes "hallucinate" and make things up
- It may reinforce bias, racism, or linguistic stereotypes
- It raises questions about originality, plagiarism, and ethics
- It uses huge amounts of energy and data, which has environmental and labor costs
- There are concerns about its long-term impact on critical thinking skills and attention spans
- GenAI companies profit from people's intellectual property, some of which they did not share purposefully

- GenAI can spread false information

Different Perspectives: What Do Educators Think?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to GenAI in education. Teachers, researchers, and institutions are still figuring it out. Some believe GenAI can be a useful tool, like a calculator for writers. Others argue that it undermines the purpose of writing—thinking through ideas, communicating authentically, and developing a voice. In fact, some worry that AI exacerbates our difficulty to tell fact from fiction and has insidious environmental impacts.

We'll include a few different viewpoints below to give you a sense of how these conversations are happening in real classrooms.

Kate's Point of View

I mostly want to make sure that students understand how large language models (LLMs) work, and how GenAI is trained on LLMs. As in all writing situations, I think it is important to not simply apply the default – whether that relates to font, margins, or integrated GenAI tools. Instead, we should make intentional decisions about our writing, based on audience, purpose, and context.

GenAI will not be helpful for students in drafting writing projects in most of my classes, but I can imagine other uses in which it could be helpful. There are endless think pieces about the impact of GenAI, but I find IBM's discussion of *what* LLMs are helpful, though of course it's important to consider their bias as a company that is profiting from GenAI. Cleveland State University has a useful library guide that includes recommendations for when A.I. might be helpful in the research process.

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Nich's Point of View

A.I. can feel overwhelming, but I don't think we need to fear it. Like any powerful tool, it all comes down to how we use it.

In a TIME article I love, Catherine Goetze writes that "the root culprit isn't AI—it's the erosion of our attention spans," shaped by years of social media and constant notifications. A.I. didn't cause that—but it can, if approached with care, mitigate the worst effects of it. When used thoughtfully, A.I. can actually spark curiosity, deepen learning, and help us explore questions that aren't easily answerable.

So yes, A.I. can be misused—but it can also be a creative, supportive tool in your learning journey. The key is to stay curious, stay reflective, and use A.I. to amplify your voice, not replace it.

Goetze, Catherine. “The Real Reason Why Students Are Using AI to Avoid Learning.” *TIME*, 17 Apr. 2025, time.com/7276807/why-students-using-ai-avoid-learning.

Melissa’s Point of View

Many people think the future is A.I. – but I prefer to chant: The future is HUMAN.

Students have individualized experiences and individual voices that A.I. will never replicate. Because writing is thinking–students must be prepared to put aside A.I. if they want to grow. Authentic voice will result in dynamic learning and is a requirement for my classroom.

And yet, understanding how students can use A.I. in the classroom as thinkers, researchers, and writers will be essential in modern intellectual and academic growth. Assisting in brainstorming, outlining, grammar checking, and citation tools are examples of acceptable ways that writers can be supported. Like automatic light functions on a car, though, the driver must make sure they are on and occasionally change some light bulbs.

When considering A.I., students must become aware that issues are larger than understanding how it will affect writing. The ethics of resources and the principles of design and dangers should be discussed in the classroom, too. A.I. will likely provide more opportunity and more danger than we have all considered. The podcast link below encourages consideration of ethics, creativity, and design with A.I. use.

Clark, Jack. “Tetragrammaton with Rick Rubin.” *Apple Podcasts,* https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/tetragrammaton-with-rick-rubin/id1671669052.

Caroline’s Point of View

When I’ve asked my students how they use Generative A.I., I’ve gotten a whole range of answers: some use it as a math tutor to help them understand complex mathematical formulas; some use it to distill their own notes from history class lectures in order to study for exams more effectively; some even use it to quickly generate content for Composition class and submit it without reading it. Some of my students experience GenAI as a tool that helps them learn more content more efficiently, and go farther in their scholarly projects than they would be able to on their own. Some of my students experience GenAI as rendering their college assignments useless wastes of time, since they aren’t learning anything from the process of completing them.

From what I can tell, most of my students have complex feelings about GenAI: they appreciate many aspects of it, but simultaneously see issues that are negatively affecting their lives.

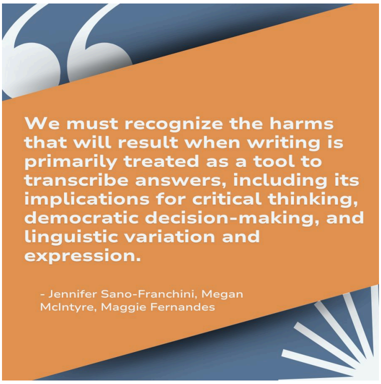
I have heard enough of the downsides of using GenAI (the ready supply of misinformation, its potential for great harm in the hands of bad actors; the environmental costs; the shuttered brain development from overreliance, and so on) that I primarily want to have thoughtful conversations with my students about intentionality in all of our use of GenAI.

But when I think about all of the unknowns about GenAI–all the excitement and all the risk–I am encouraged by my students' ideas for navigating this new world in healthy ways and the boundaries they are setting, and I believe that for as many problems as humans are able to create, we are equally able to create solutions.

Here are some important resources on GenAI and writing. These readings go deeper into the ethical, professional, and pedagogical concerns that teachers and scholars are exploring.

[Refusing Generative AI in Writing Studies]

This guide frames refusal as *a deliberate and informed choice*, not fear or ignorance. The authors argue that writing is a deeply human, rhetorical act that GenAI cannot fully replicate. They raise concerns about labor, equity, language homogenization, and the environmental and ideological impacts of GenAI in writing education.



Generative AI and Policy Development: Guidance from the MLA-CCCC Task Force
This working paper provides thoughtful guidance for schools and teachers developing classroom policies about GenAI. It encourages flexible, tiered policies—at the institutional, departmental, and individual class level—and emphasizes student learning, ethical development, and critical A.I. literacy over blanket bans or surveillance.

Ethical Use of Generative AI for Conducting Research
This activity guide outlines how students can use GenAI tools *ethically* during the research phase of writing. It emphasizes defined, purposeful engagement (like forming research questions or simplifying dense articles), while also prompting students to reflect on when and how GenAI use crosses ethical lines.

Final Thought

GenAI isn't going away. But how we *choose* to use (or not use) it in our writing matters. This chapter offers a space to think about your own relationship to these tools. Talk with your instructors, ask questions, and make thoughtful choices about how GenAI fits into your learning process.

PART II

RESEARCH PROCESSES

What comes to mind when you hear the word "Research"?

For many people, the word research conjures images of long papers, endless sources, and complicated databases. But research is much more than collecting evidence to support a thesis—it's a *process* rooted in curiosity, exploration, and discovery. It begins not with answers but with questions (hence the title of this textbook!) and grows through thoughtful reading, critical thinking, and strategic searching. The chapters in this section reframe research as a dynamic and creative practice, one that helps you engage with ideas, join academic conversations, and develop your voice as a writer.

We begin with Emilie Zickel's Analyzing the Genre of Your Readings, which introduces the concept of genre analysis and explains how recognizing a text's structure and conventions can help readers better interpret and respond to academic writing. Michael Bunn's How to Read Like a Writer includes advice that can greatly benefit not only comprehension but also developing composition skills. This chapter can aid you in identifying key rhetorical moves that writers make, so that you can add to your writer's toolkit. Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel follow with Reading Rhetorically, presenting strategies for understanding how authors shape meaning for specific audiences and purposes. They emphasize rhetorical awareness as a foundation for effective academic reading and writing.

Karen Rosenberg shares her personal experiences as a student who needed to learn how to read academic material more effectively in Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources. She provides both rationale and instruction for the reading and use of scholarly sources. In this essay, you are given an approach for reading complex texts. MTSU's Dr. Julie Myatt's Bad Idea About Writing: "Reading is Not Essential to Writing Instruction" pushes back against the idea that reading and writing can—or should—be taught in isolation. She advocates for a more integrated approach to reading and writing instruction to better support students' development as readers, writers, and thinkers. In Bad Idea About Writing: "Reading and Writing are not Connected," Ellen C. Carillo uses research to challenge the belief that one can be an effective writer without routinely engaging in reading activities. She suggests that it is necessary to carefully consider the relationships between these two activities.

From there, the section moves into chapters that center the research process itself. In Bad Idea About Writing: "Research Starts With Answers," Alison C. Witte encourages students to rethink the idea that research begins with predetermined answers. The chapter makes a case for curiosity-driven inquiry and reminds readers that research often leads to unexpected discoveries. Emily A. Wierszewski's Bad Idea About Writing: "Research Starts With a Thesis Statement" critiques the common assumption that a thesis must come first in the research process. Instead, she promotes a more flexible approach where questions lead the way and arguments emerge through investigation.

In Developing a Research Question, Emilie Zickel helps you to understand what a research question is and how to devise one, providing brainstorming prompts and tips on how to arrive at a question from topic consideration. In James P. Purdy's Wikipedia Is Good for You!?, he argues that Wikipedia can be a useful tool at the beginning stages of research. Readers learn how to use the site critically to gain background information and identify additional sources. Coming Up With Research Strategies, by Rashida Mustafa and Emilie Zickel, includes tips on developing a research strategy, as well as notes about where to find sources and how to use Wikipedia as a source for finding usable texts.

The chapters in this section collectively emphasize that research is not a linear checklist but a flexible, reflective process that begins with questions and evolves through exploration. As you read, you'll encounter strategies for reading critically, framing meaningful questions, locating and evaluating sources, and integrating research into your own writing.

7.

ANALYZING THE GENRE OF YOUR READINGS

Emilie Zickel

You will be invited to read many different kinds of **texts** this semester. To conduct your research projects, you will draw on multiple sources, including scholarly journal articles. Some scholarly journal articles may be organized in ways that differ from the sources you're accustomed to reading. However, the **purpose**, **format**, and **style** of scholarly/academic journal articles are rather patterned. Knowing the template that scholarly articles follow can enhance your reading and comprehension experience and make these reading materials much more accessible.

This common structure—or **arrangement**—applied to academic articles is often referred to in shorthand as IMRAD, which stands for Introduction, Methods, Research, and Discussion. These are both the headings and the rhetorical moves that most scholarly articles in the sciences and social sciences follow. Moreover, understanding the purpose of scholarly publication can help you to understand what matters most in these articles. Although there are certainly differences across disciplines and journals, the more you look for these particular rhetorical moves in scholarly articles, the more you'll begin to recognize similar **genre conventions** in these articles. You'll also start to note some of the differences between particular instances within the **genre**; these are known as **deviations**. Below we offer a genre analysis of sorts to help you identify some of the notable components of the IMRAD format.

Basic Format

Information in academic journal articles is often presented in a formal, highly prescribed format, meaning that scholarly articles tend to follow a similar layout, pattern, and style. The pages often look plain, with little decoration or imagery. Depending on the discipline, we see few photos in scholarly articles. This may differ in online publications, where the cost for images doesn't apply the way it might in a print text. The article title is often fairly prominent on the first page, as are the authors' names. Sometimes there is a bit of information the authors, such as the name of their current academic institution or academic credentials. At either the top or bottom of the first few pages, you can find the name of the scholarly journal in which the article is published.

Abstract

On the first page of the article, you will often find an abstract, which is a summary of the author's research question, methodologies and results. While this abstract is useful to you as a reader because it gives you some background about the article before you begin reading, you should not cite this abstract in your paper. Please read these abstracts as you are initially seeking sources so that you can determine whether or not reading the article will be useful to you, but do not quote or paraphrase from the abstract.

Literature Review

Scholarly sources often contain **Literature Reviews** in the beginning section of the article. They are generally several paragraphs or pages long. Some articles are only Literature Reviews. These Literature Reviews generally do not constitute an author's own work. Instead, they are summaries and syntheses of other scholars' work that has previously been published on the topic that the author is addressing in the paper. Including this review of previous research helps the author to communicate an understanding of the context or discourse community from which the author's new research is derived.

Like the abstract, the Literature Review is another part of a scholarly article from which you should generally not quote. Often, students will mistakenly try to cite information that they find in this Literature Review section of scholarly articles. But that is sort of like citing a SparkNotes version of an essay that you have not read. The Literature Review is where the author describes previous research related to their own project. In this section, the author is outlining what others have said in their own articles, not offering new insight. And it is important to remember that what we are interested in when reading scholarly articles is the new information or perspective that a researcher brings to the topic.

Helpful hint: If you find that there is interesting information from the sources that your author discusses in the Literature Review, then you should locate the article(s) that the author is summarizing and read them for yourself. That, in fact, is a great strategy for finding more sources.

The “Research Gap”

Somewhere near the end of the Literature Review, authors may indicate what has not been said or not been examined by previous scholars. This has been called a "**research gap**" —a space out of which a scholar’s own research develops. The “research gap” opens the opportunity for the author to assert their own research question or claim. Academic authors who want to publish in scholarly research journals need to define a research gap and then attempt to fill that gap; this is because scholarly journals want to publish new, innovative and interesting work that will push knowledge and scholarship in that field forward. In the research gap discussion, scholars must communicate the new ideas they have worked on: what their new **hypothesis**, experiment, interpretation, or analysis is.

Contributing New Perspectives

After mentioning the research gap, and sometimes for the bulk of an academic article, **the author discusses their original work and analysis**. **This is the part of the scholarly article that you should cite from**, as it indicates the work your authors have contributed. This is the section of the text where authors add to the conversation, where they try to fill in the research gap that they identified. This is also the part of the article where the primary research can be found. The authors may include a discussion of their research **methodology** and results, or an elaboration and defense of their reasoning, interpretation, or analysis. In this part of the article, scholarly texts in the sciences or social sciences may include headings such as "Methods," "Results," and "Discussion," or synonyms of those words. In arts or humanities journal articles, these headings may not appear because scholars in the arts and humanities do not necessarily perform lab-based research in the same way as scientists or social scientists do. Authors may reference others' research even in this section of original work and analysis, but usually only to support, contrast, or enhance the discussion of the scholar's own findings.

Conclusion

To conclude a scholarly journal article, authors may reference their original **research question** or hypothesis once more. They may summarize some of the points made in the article. We often see scholars concluding by indicating how, why, or to whom their research matters. Sometimes, authors will conclude by looking forward, offering ideas for other scholars to engage in future research. Sometimes, they may reflect on why an experiment failed (if it did) and how to approach that experiment differently next time. What we do not tend to see is scholars merely summarizing everything they discussed in the essay, point by point. While there is some summarization of main body content, authors also want to leave readers with a sense of why the work that they have discussed in their article matters.

Works Cited

At the end of academic articles, you will find a list of **Works Cited**—also called a list of References, depending on the style employed by the author. This is generally quite long, and it details all of the work that the authors considered or cited in designing their own research project or in writing the article.

Helpful hint: reading the Works Cited in an article that you find to be particularly illuminating or useful can be a great way to locate other sources that may be helpful for your own research project. If you see a title that looks interesting, see if you can access it via our library.

As you read scholarly sources, remember to

- look for the author's research question or hypothesis;
- seek out the "research gap"—the reason that the author had this research question or hypothesis;
- identify the Literature Review;
- identify the the point at which the author stops discussing previous research and begins to discuss his or her own;
- and, most importantly, always try to understand what new information this article brings to the scholarly "conversation" about this topic.

Attributions

8.

HOW TO READ LIKE A WRITER

Mike Bunn

Abstract

Mike Bunn's essay "How to Read Like a Writer" comes from the book *Writing Spaces*. They offer the following abstract for the text: "Learning to "read like a writer" can be a great benefit to students. [...] Students will find this chapter useful for expanding their writing strategies by helping them learn to identify key moments in texts, moments when the author uses an innovative technique, which they might employ in their own writing. Detailed steps and comments, incorporating the voices of numerous

students, will assist you in teaching students how to practice the habit of reading like a writer."

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three hour performance of the musical *Les Miserables*. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.

My job (in addition to wearing a red tuxedo jacket) was to sit inside the dark theater with the patrons and make sure nothing went wrong. It didn't seem to matter to my supervisor that I had no training in security and no idea where we kept the fire extinguishers. I was pretty sure that if there *was* any trouble I'd be running down the back stairs, leaving the patrons to fend for themselves. I had no intention of dying in a bright red tuxedo.

There was a Red Coat stationed on each of the theater's four floors, and we all passed the time by sitting quietly in the back, reading books with tiny flashlights. It's not easy trying to read in the dim light of a theatre—flashlight or no flashlight—and it's even tougher with shrieks and shouts and gunshots coming from the stage. I had to focus intently on each and every word, often rereading a single sentence several times. Sometimes I got distracted and had to re-read entire paragraphs. As I struggled to read in this environment, I began to realize that the way I was reading—one word at a time—was exactly the same way that the author had written the text. I realized writing is a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence process. The intense concentration required to read in the theater helped me recognize some of the interesting ways that authors string words into phrases into paragraphs into entire books.

I came to realize that all writing consists of a series of choices.

I was an English major in college, but I don't think I ever thought much about reading. I read all the time. I read for my classes and on the computer and sometimes for fun, but I never really thought about the important connections between reading and writing, and how reading in a particular way could also make me a better writer.

What Does It Mean to Read Like a Writer?

When you Read Like a Writer (RLW) you work to identify some of the choices the author made so that you can better understand how such choices might arise in your own writing. The idea is to carefully examine the things you read, looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if you might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques in your writing.

You are reading to learn about writing.

Instead of reading for content or to better understand the ideas in the writing (which you will automatically do to some degree anyway), you are trying to understand how the piece of writing was put together by the author and what you can learn about writing by reading a particular text. As you read in this way, you think about how the choices the author made and the techniques that he/she used are influencing your own responses as a reader. What is it about the way this text is written that makes you feel and respond the way you do?

The goal as you read like a writer is to locate what you believe are the most important writerly choices represented in the text—choices as large as the overall structure or as small as a single word used only once—to consider the effect of those choices on potential readers (including yourself). Then you can go one step further and imagine what *different* choices the *author* might have made instead, and what effect those different choices would have on readers.

Say you're reading an essay in class that begins with a short quote from President Barack Obama about the war in Iraq. As a writer, what do you think of this technique? Do you think it is effective to begin the essay with a quote? What if the essay began with a quote from someone else? What if it was a much *longer* quote from President Obama, or a quote from the President about something other than the war?

And here is where we get to the most important part: *Would you want to try this technique in your own writing?*

Would you want to start your own essay with a quote? Do you think it would be effective to begin your essay with a quote from President Obama? What about a quote from someone else?

You could make yourself a list. What are the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote? What about the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from the President? How would other readers respond to this technique? Would certain readers (say Democrats or liberals) appreciate an essay that started with a quote from President Obama better than other readers (say Republicans or conservatives)? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of starting with a quote from a *less* divisive person?What about starting with a quote from someone *more* divisive?

The goal is to carefully consider the choices the author made and the techniques that he or she used, and then decide whether you want to make those same choices or use those same techniques in your own writing. Author and professor Wendy Bishop explains how her reading process changed when she began to read like a writer:

> It wasn't until I claimed the sentence as my area of desire, interest, and expertise—until I wanted to be a writer writing better—that I had to look underneath my initial readings . . . I started asking, *how—how* did the writer get me to feel, *how* did the writer say something so that it remains in my memory when many other things too easily fall out, *how* did the writer communicate his/her intentions about genre, about irony? (119–20)

Bishop moved from simply reporting her personal reactions to the things she read to attempting to uncover *how* the author led her (and other readers) to have those reactions. This effort to uncover how authors build texts is what makes Reading Like a Writer so useful for student writers.

How Is RLW Different from "Normal" Reading?

Most of the time we read for information. We read a recipe to learn how to bake lasagna. We read the sports page to see if our school won the game, Facebook to see who has commented on our status update, a history book to learn about the Vietnam War, and the syllabus to see when the next writing assignment is due. Reading Like a Writer asks for something very different.

In 1940, a famous poet and critic named Allen Tate discussed two different ways of reading:

> There are many ways to read, but generally speaking there are two ways. They correspond to the two ways in which we may be interested in a piece of architecture. If the building has Corinthian columns, we can trace the origin and development of Corinthian columns; we are interested as historians. But if we are interested as architects, we may or may not know about the history of the Corinthian style; we must, however, know all about the construction of the building, down to the last nail or peg in the beams. We have got to know this if we are going to put up buildings ourselves. (506)

While I don't know anything about Corinthian columns (and doubt that I will ever *want* to know anything about Corinthian columns), Allen Tate's metaphor of reading as if you were an architect is a great way to think about RLW. When you read like a writer, you are trying to figure out how the text you are reading was constructed so that you learn how to "build" one for yourself. Author David Jauss makes a similar comparison when he writes that "reading won't help you much unless you learn to read like a writer. You must look at a book the way a carpenter looks at a house someone else built, examining the details in order to see how it was made" (64).

Perhaps I should change the name and call this Reading Like an Architect, or Reading Like a Carpenter. In a way those names make perfect sense. You are reading to see how something was constructed so that you can construct something similar yourself.

Why Learn to Read Like a Writer?

For most college students RLW is a new way to read, and it can be difficult to learn at first. Making things even *more* difficult is that your college writing instructor may expect you to read this way for class but never actually teach you how to do it. He or she may not even tell you that you're supposed to read this way. This is because most writing instructors are so focused on teaching writing that they forget to show students how they want them to read.

That's what this essay is for.

In addition to the fact that your college writing instructor may expect you to read like a writer, this kind of reading is also one of the very best ways to learn how to write well. Reading like a writer can help you understand how the process of writing is a series of making choices, and in doing so, can help you recognize important decisions you might face and techniques you might want to use when working on your own writing. Reading this way becomes an opportunity to think and learn about writing.

Charles Moran, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, urges us to read like writers because:

> When we read like writers we understand and participate in the writing. We see the choices the writer has made, and we see how the writer has coped with the consequences of those

> choices . . . We "see" what the writer is doing because we read as writers; we see because we have written ourselves and know the territory, know the feel of it, know some of the moves ourselves. (61)

You are already an author, and that means you have a built-in advantage when reading like a writer. All of your previous writing experiences—inside the classroom and out—can contribute to your success with RLW. Because you "have written" things yourself, just as Moran suggests, you are better able to "see" the choices that the author is making in the texts that you read. This in turn helps you to think about whether you want to make some of those same choices in your own writing, and what the consequences might be for your readers if you do.

What Are Some Questions to Ask Before You Start Reading?

As I sat down to work on this essay, I contacted a few of my former students to ask what advice they would give to college students regarding how to read effectively in the writing classroom and also to get their thoughts on RLW. Throughout the rest of the essay I'd like to share some of their insights and suggestions; after all, who is better qualified to help you learn what you need to know about reading in college writing courses than students who recently took those courses themselves?

One of the things that several students mentioned to do first, before you even start reading, is to consider the *context* surrounding both the assignment and the text you're reading. As one former student, Alison, states: "The reading I did in college asked me to go above and beyond, not only in breadth of subject matter, but in depth, with regards to informed analysis and background information on *context*." Alison was asked to think about some of the factors that went into the creation of the text, as well as some of the factors influencing her own experience of reading—taken together these constitute the *context* of reading. Another former student, Jamie, suggests that students "learn about the historical context of the writings" they will read for class. Writing professor Richard Straub puts it this way: "You're not going to just read a text. You're going to read a text within a certain context, a set of circumstances . . . It's one kind of writing or another, designed for one audience and purpose or another" (138).

Among the contextual factors you'll want to consider before you even start reading are:

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Do you know who the intended audience is for this piece of writing?

It may be that you need to start reading before you can answer these first two questions, but it's worth trying to answer them before you start. For example, if you know at the outset that the author is trying to reach a very specific group of readers, then his or her writerly techniques may seem more or less effective than if he/she was trying to reach a more general audience. Similarly—returning to our earlier example of beginning an essay with a quote from President Obama about the war in Iraq—if you know that the author's purpose is to address some of the dangers and drawbacks of warfare, this may be a very effective opening. If the purpose is to encourage Americans to wear sunscreen while at the beach this opening makes no sense at all. One former student, Lola, explained that most of her reading assignments in college writing classes were designed "to provoke analysis and criticisms into the style, structure, and *purpose* of the writing itself."

In What Genre Is This Written?

Another important thing to consider before reading is the genre of the text. Genre means a few different things in college English classes, but it's most often used to indicate the *type* of writing: a poem, a newspaper article, an essay, a short story, a novel, a legal brief, an instruction manual, etc. Because the conventions for each genre can be very different (who ever heard of a 900-page newspaper article?), techniques that are effective for one genre may not work well in another. Many readers expect poems and pop songs to rhyme, for example, but might react negatively to a legal brief or instruction manual that did so.

Another former student, Mike, comments on how important the genre of the text can be for reading:

> I think a lot of the way I read, of course, depends on the type of text I'm reading. If I'm reading philosophy, I always look for signaling words (however, therefore, furthermore, despite) indicating the direction of the argument . . . when I read fiction or creative nonfiction, I look for how the author inserts dialogue or character sketches within narration or environmental observation. After reading To the Lighthouse

> [sic] last semester, I have noticed how much more attentive I've become to the types of narration (omniscient, impersonal, psychological, realistic, etc.), and how these different approaches are utilized to achieve an author's overall effect.

Although Mike specifically mentions what he looked for while reading a published novel, one of the great things about RLW is that it can be used equally well with either published or student-produced writing.

Is This a Published or a Student-Produced Piece of Writing?

As you read both kinds of texts you can locate the choices the author made and imagine the different decisions that he/she might have made. While it might seem a little weird at first to imagine how published texts could be written differently—after all, they were good enough to be published—remember that all writing can be improved. Scholar Nancy Walker believes that it's important for students to read published work using RLW because "the work ceases to be a mere artifact, a stone tablet, and becomes instead a living utterance with immediacy and texture. It could have been better or worse than it is had the author made different choices" (36). As Walker suggests, it's worth thinking about how the published text would be different—maybe even *better*—if the author had made different choices in the writing because you may be faced with similar choices in your own work.

Is This the Kind of Writing You Will Be Assigned to Write Yourself?

Knowing ahead of time what kind of writing assignments you will be asked to complete can really help you to read like a writer. It's probably impossible (and definitely too time consuming) to identify *all* of the choices the author made and *all* techniques an author used, so it's important to prioritize while reading. Knowing what you'll be writing yourself can help you prioritize. It may be the case that your instructor has assigned the text you're reading to serve as model for the kind of writing you'll be doing later. Jessie, a former student, writes, "In college writing classes, we knew we were reading for a purpose—to influence or inspire our own work. The reading that I have done in college writing courses has always been really specific to a certain type of writing, and it allows me to focus and experiment on that specific style in depth and without distraction."

If the text you're reading is a model of a particular style of writing—for example, highly-emotional or humorous—RLW is particularly helpful because you can look at a piece you're reading and think about whether you want to adopt a similar style in your own writing. You might realize that the author is trying to arouse sympathy in readers and examine what techniques he/she uses to do this; then you can decide whether these techniques might work well in your own writing. You might notice that the author keeps including jokes or funny stories and think about whether you want to include them in your writing—what would the impact be on your potential readers?

What Are Questions to Ask As You Are Reading?

It is helpful to continue to ask yourself questions as you read like a writer. As you're first learning to read in this new way, you may want to have a set of questions written or typed out in front of you that you can refer to while reading. Eventually—after plenty of practice—you will start to ask certain questions and locate certain things in the text almost automatically. Remember, for most students this is a new way of reading, and you'll have to train yourself to do it well. Also keep in mind that you're reading to understand how the text was written— how the house was built—more than you're trying to determine the meaning of the things you read or assess whether the texts are good or bad.

First, return to two of the same questions I suggested that you consider *before* reading:

- What is the author's purpose for this piece of writing?
- Who is the intended audience?

Think about these two questions again as you read. It may be that you couldn't really answer them before, or that your ideas will change while reading. Knowing *why* the piece was written and *who* it's for can help explain why the author might have made certain choices or used particular techniques in the writing, and you can assess those choices and techniques based in part on how effective they are in fulfilling that purpose and/or reaching the intended audience.

Beyond these initial two questions, there is an almost endless list of questions you might ask regarding writing choices and techniques. Here are some of the questions that one former student, Clare, asks herself:

> When reading I tend to be asking myself a million questions. If I were writing this, where would I go with the story? If the author goes in a different direction (as they so often do) from what I am thinking, I will ask myself, why did they do this? What are they telling me?

Clare tries to figure out why the author might have made a move in the writing that she hadn't anticipated, but even more importantly, she asks herself what she would do if she were the author. Reading the text becomes an opportunity for Clare to think about her own role as an author.

Here are some additional examples of the kinds of questions you might ask yourself as you read:

- How effective is the language the author uses? Is it too formal? Too informal? Perfectly appropriate?

Depending on the subject matter and the intended audience, it may make sense to be more or less formal in terms of language. As you begin reading, you can ask yourself whether the word choice and tone/ language of the writing seem appropriate.

- What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Does he/she use statistics? Quotes from famous people? Personal anecdotes or personal stories? Does he/she cite books or articles?

- How appropriate or effective is this evidence? Would a different type of evidence, or some combination of evidence, be more effective?

To some extent the kinds of questions you ask should be determined by the genre of writing you are reading. For example, it's probably worth examining the evidence that the author uses to support his/ her claims if you're reading an opinion column, but less important if you're reading a short story. An opinion column is often intended to convince readers of something, so the kinds of evidence used are often very important. A short story may be intended to convince readers of something, sometimes, but probably not in the same way. A short story rarely includes claims or evidence in the way that we usually think about them.

- Are there places in the writing that you find confusing? What about the writing in those places makes it unclear or confusing?

It's pretty normal to get confused in places while reading, especially while reading for class, so it can be helpful to look closely at the writing to try and get a sense of exactly what tripped you up. This way you can learn to avoid those same problems in your own writing.

- How does the author move from one idea to another in the writing? Are the transitions between the ideas effective? How else might he/ she have transitioned between ideas instead?

Notice that in these questions I am encouraging you to question whether aspects of the writing are *appropriate* and *effective* in addition to deciding whether you liked or disliked them. You want to imagine how other readers might respond to the writing and the techniques you've identified. Deciding whether you liked or disliked something is only about you; considering whether a technique is appropriate or effective lets you contemplate what the author might have been trying to do and to decide whether a majority of readers would find the move successful. This is important because it's the same thing you should be thinking about while you are writing: how will readers respond to this technique I am using, to this sentence, to this word? As you read, ask yourself what the author is doing at each step of the way, and then consider whether the same choice or technique might work in your own writing.

What Should You Be Writing As You Are Reading?

The most common suggestion made by former students—mentioned by every single one of them—was to mark up the text, make comments in the margins, and write yourself notes and summaries both during and after reading. Often the notes students took while reading became ideas or material for the students to use in their own papers. It's important to read with a pen or highlighter in your hand so that you can mark—right on the text—all those spots where you identify an interesting choice the author has made or a writerly technique you might want to use. One thing that I like to do is to highlight and underline the passage in the text itself, and then try to answer the following three questions on my notepad:

- What is the technique the author is using here?
- Is this technique effective?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages if I tried this same technique in my writing?

By utilizing this same process of highlighting and note taking, you'll end up with a useful list of specific techniques to have at your disposal when it comes time to begin your own writing.

What Does RLW Look Like in Action?

Let's go back to the opening paragraph of this essay and spend some time reading like writers as a way to get more comfortable with the process:

> *In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical* Les Miserables. *Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Let's begin with those questions I encouraged you to try to answer *before* you start reading. (I realize we're cheating a little bit in this case since you've already read most of this essay, but this is just practice. When doing this on your own, you should attempt to answer these questions before reading, and then return to them as you read to further develop your answers.)

- Do you know the author's purpose for this piece of writing? I hope the purpose is clear by now; if it isn't, I'm doing a pretty lousy job of explaining how and why you might read like a writer.
- Do you know who the intended audience is? Again, I hope that you know this one by now.
- What about the genre? Is this an essay? An article? What would *you* call it?
- You know that it's published and not student writing. How does this influence your expectations for what you will read?
- Are you going to be asked to write something like this yourself? Probably not in your college writing class, but you can still use RLW to learn about writerly techniques that you might want to use in whatever you do end up writing.

Now ask yourself questions *as* you read.

> *In 1997, I was a recent college graduate living in London for six months and working at the Palace Theatre owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The Palace was a beautiful red brick, four-story theatre in the heart of London's famous West End, and eight times a week it housed a three-hour performance of the musical Les Miserables. Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of*

> *staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

Since this paragraph is the very first one, it makes sense to think about how it introduces readers to the essay. What technique(s) does the author use to begin the text? This is a personal story about his time working in London. What else do you notice as you read over this passage? Is the passage vague or specific about where he worked? You know that the author worked in a famous part of London in a beautiful theater owned by a well-known composer. Are these details important? How different would this opening be if instead I had written:

> *In 1997, I was living in London and working at a theatre that showed* Les Miserables.

This is certainly shorter, and some of you may prefer this version. It's quick. To the point. But what (if anything) is lost by eliminating so much of the detail? I *chose* to include each of the details that the revised sentence omits, so it's worth considering why. Why did I mention where the theater was located? Why did I explain that I was living in London right after finishing college? Does it matter that it was after college? What effect might I have hoped the inclusion of these details would have on readers? Is this reference to college an attempt to connect with my audience of college students? Am I trying to establish my credibility as an author by announcing that I went to college? Why might I want the readers to know that this was a theater owned by Andrew Lloyd Weber? Do you think I am just trying to mention a famous name that readers will recognize? Will Andrew Lloyd Weber figure prominently in the rest of the essay?

These are all reasonable questions to ask. They are not necessarily the *right* questions to ask because there are no right questions. They certainly aren't the only questions you could ask, either. The goal is to train yourself to formulate questions as you read based on whatever you notice in the text. Your own reactions to what you're reading will help determine the kinds of questions to ask.

Now take a broader perspective. I begin this essay—an essay about *reading*—by talking about my job in a theater in London. Why? Doesn't this seem like an odd way to begin an essay about reading? If you read on a little further (feel free to scan back up at the top of this essay) you learn in the third full paragraph what the connection is between working in the theater and reading like a writer, but why include this information at all? What does this story add to the essay? Is it worth the space it takes up?

Think about what effect presenting this personal information might have on readers. Does it make it feel like a real person, some "ordinary guy," is talking to you? Does it draw you into the essay and make you want to keep reading?

What about the language I use? Is it formal or more informal? This is a time when you can really narrow your focus and look at particular words:

> *Because of antiquated fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of staff members inside watching the performance in case of an emergency.*

What is the effect of using the word "antiquated" to describe the firesafety laws? It certainly projects a negative impression; if the laws are described as antiquated it means I view them as old-fashioned or obsolete. This is a fairly uncommon word, so it stands out, drawing attention to my choice in using it. The word also sounds quite formal. Am I formal in the rest of this sentence?

I use the word "performance" when I just as easily could have written "show." For that matter, I could have written "old" instead of "antiquated." You can proceed like this throughout the sentence, thinking about alternative choices I could have made and what the effect would be. Instead of "staff members" I could have written "employees" or just "workers." Notice the difference if the sentence had been written:

> *Because of old fire-safety laws, every theatre in the city was required to have a certain number of workers inside watching the show in case of an emergency.*

Which version is more likely to appeal to readers? You can try to answer this question by thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of using formal language. When would you want to use formal language in your writing and when would it make more sense to be more conversational? As you can see from discussing just this one paragraph, you could ask questions about the text forever. Luckily, you don't have to.

As you continue reading like a writer, you'll learn to notice techniques that seem new and pay less attention to the ones you've thought about before. The more you practice the quicker the process becomes until you're reading like a writer almost automatically.

I want to end this essay by sharing one more set of comments by my former student, Lola, this time about what it means to her to read like a writer:

> Reading as a writer would compel me to question what might have brought the author to make these decisions, and then decide what worked and what didn't. What could have made that chapter better or easier to understand? How can I make sure I include some of the good attributes of this writing style into my own? How can I take aspects that I feel the writer failed at and make sure not to make the same mistakes in my writing?

Questioning why the author made certain decisions. Considering what techniques could have made the text better. Deciding how to include the best attributes of what you read in your own writing.

This is what Reading Like a Writer is all about.

Are you ready to start reading?

Discussion

1. How is "Reading Like a Writer" similar to and/or different from the way(s) you read for other classes?
2. What kinds of choices do you make as a writer that readers might identify in your written work?
3. Is there anything you notice in this essay that you might like to try in your own writing? What is that technique or strategy? When do you plan to try using it?
4. What are some of the different ways that you

can learn about the context of a text before you begin reading it?

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Attributions

9.

READING RHETORICALLY

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

When we read *rhetorically*, we are moving beyond simply trying to comprehend what an author is saying at a basic level. Instead, one who reads rhetorically seeks to understand how meaning in a **text** is shaped not only by the text itself, but also the context through which it is presented.

Rhetorically focusing on the text might include observing the following: what the author says, the types of information that they included, and how that information is arranged.

Rhetorically focusing on the context might include observing and researching the following: the context of the text; the author's identity, values and biases; the audience's interests and needs; the **medium** in which the author composes; the purpose for creating the text.

Rhetorically Reading the Text: Understanding What the Author is Trying to Say

The following are questions and prompts that can help lead you to a rhetorical reading of a text:

- **Who is the author?** What else have they written? What is the author's occupation? Is the author a journalist, professor, business person, or entertainer? Is the author an expert on the topic covered?
- **When and where was the piece originally published?** Research the original publication. Does that publication have a perceived bias? Is the original publication highly regarded?
- **What is the author's main idea?** The main idea is the author's central **claim** or **thesis**. Describe the author's main idea in your own words. Does the author make this claim successfully? Is the claim held consistently throughout the text? Does the thesis appear in one sentence or in bits and pieces throughout the text?
- **What is the author's main purpose?** Note that this is different than the text's main idea. The text's main idea (above) refers to the central claim or thesis embedded in the text. The author's **purpose**, however, refers to what they hope to accomplish. Is the author's goal to persuade their readers to adopt a viewpoint or to act in some way? Does the author intend to

provide information or to entertain? Why does the author try to persuade you to adopt his or her viewpoint?

- **What information does the author provide to support the central claim?** Making a list of each key point the author makes will help you analyze the overall text. Hint: each paragraph should address one key point, and all paragraphs should relate to the author's central claim.
- **What kind of supporting evidence does the author use?** Is the evidence-based more on fact or opinion, and do you feel those choices are effective? Where does this evidence come from? Are the sources authoritative and credible?
- **Is the author biased?** Remember that evidence of an opinion does not necessarily constitute bias. Everyone has opinions and values, but an author's bias may compromise their ability to contribute a useful argument if their bias contradicts evidence or common sense. So, consider that if there is evidence that an author is biased, does it interfere with the way you read and understand the text?
- **Describe the tone in the piece.** Is it friendly? Authoritative? Does it read/sound like a lecture? Is it biting or sarcastic? Comedic or dire?
- **Describe the diction in the piece.** What word choices does the author make? Does the author use simple or technical language? Is it full of jargon? Does the language feel positive or

negative? Formal or conversational? Does the author use **figurative language**? Does the author use any controversial words in the piece? Do these rhetorical choices affect your reading or your interest?

- **Does the text seem to be aimed at readers like you or at a different audience?** Is the author trying to reach a certain age group, ethnicity, gender, or educational background? Which parts of the argument relay the primary intended **audience** for the text? What assumptions does the author make about the primary intended audience? Would most people find these assumptions reasonable, acceptable, or accurate?
- **Does the author try to appeal to your emotions?** Does the author use any controversial words in the piece? Do these affect your reading or your interest?
- **How is the piece organized?** Where does the thesis appear? Toward the beginning or the end of the text and why? Are there sections with bolded subheadings, and if so, do these subheadings accurately reflect the content of the section?
- **Does the piece include images or graphics?** Are there illustrations, photographs, or graphs? Do these images add to or detract from the written text?

Rhetorically Reading the Context: Understanding

Context

In addition to posing textual questions, we need to look at **contextual** considerations when we read rhetorically. Everything you read, and all that you write must be considered contextually, which is what instructors are referring to when mentioning "**rhetorical context**" or the "**rhetorical situation**". Let's define *context* as the time and place and setting of the event, the writing of a text, a film, etc., in a society. In a First-Year Writing class, you will read essays, news articles, scholarly research findings, and to help make sense of the arguments in these documents you must contextualize their contents. Why? Well, today is not like yesterday.

For an example of how yesterday is different than today, think about your smartphone. You may have been born at the end of the 20th century or the start of the twenty-first century. At that time, your family had a cordless phone. Thirty years ago, most households had landline phones—rotary phones—and had to dial a number. In most households today, there is no landline and rotary phones are now considered historical artifacts.

Figure 1: Rotary phone

This example of the rotary phone should reveal to you that people's experience with communication was much different a few decades ago than it is now. And this should help you to realize that better understanding the historical or societal context in which an argument is made is essential to comprehending the **exigence** for that argument, as well as key to determining if the argument was made at a **kairotic** moment.

Think about Susan B. Anthony's speech "Is it a Crime to Vote?" from 1872 – 1873. If you do not consider that women did not have the right to vote in America when that speech was made, then her claims would not make sense, claims such as "One-half of the people of this nation to-day are utterly powerless to blot from the statute books an unjust law, or to write there a new and a just one." Consequently, understanding context is essential to understanding arguments.

In order to read and write rhetorically, you have to carefully consider context as you begin assignments. Below are a few questions you might want to consider when analyzing the time, place, and setting of a text:

- Where was the text published?
- Was it published online or in print?
- When was the text published? What does this tell you about the time it was written? Is it still relevant information or outdated?
- What is the author's main idea? Is it a current belief ?
- Is the argument kairotic now or was it kairotic during a different era?

As a student, if you begin to read contextually, you can shift to reading critically. These are the skills a critical thinker employs to make inquiries about the world.

Rhetorically Reading the Context: Understanding Author Credibility

Often, understanding an author's credibility will require some research that goes well beyond any blurb that might be included with the actual article. Google the author, or consider looking at their LinkedIn profile. Look at several different sources instead of relying on just one website to understand who the author is. Most reputable websites and news sources will list or cite an author, even though you might have to dig into the site deeper than just the section you're interested in to find it. Most pages will have a home page or "About Us"/"About This Site" link where an author will be credited.

To better investigate for credibility, you might consider asking yourself questions like the following:

- Does the author support a particular political or religious view that could be affecting his or her approach to the piece?
- Is the author supported by any special-interest groups (i.e. the American Library Association or Keep America Safe)?
- Is the author a highly educated expert on that topic who is choosing to publish an article for a popular, mainstream audience?
- Is the author a journalist? ? A citizen who is weighing in? In other words, is it a news report or an opinion piece?
- Is the author writing from personal experience, or is the author synthesizing and offering commentary on others' experiences or studies?

Each of these different levels of expertise will confer a different level of authority on the topic. It is important to understand whether or not an author is truly an expert on the content.

Checking for Publication Bias

Certain media may have particular political ideologies or biases that impact their reporting. Just as you should do some background research on an individual author, do some research on the publication that hosts the article you would like to use. One of the best sources to help you get a sense of a particular source's potential bias is to consider the Media Bias Chart. This resource helps identify whether the purpose of the particular media source is entertainment, informative journalism, or supporting a particular political agenda. All people have opinions, so if you see evidence of an opinion in writing, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's not a reliable source. The key is to determine whether or not the opinions and/or biases expressed by a particular source or author compromise the ethics of factual reporting. Compare different sources and be attentive to the way findings are shared.

You might also use the following questions to help you recognize whether or not a medium is inherently biased:

- Does the publication have an ideological or political bias? Is the publication religious? Secular?
- Is the publication created for a very specific target audience?
- If you are looking at a website, what is its purpose? Was the site created to sell things, or are the authors trying to persuade voters to take a side on a particular issue?

If you are looking at a website, the sponsor of the site—the person or organization who is footing the bill—will often be listed in the same place as the copyright date or author information. If you can't find an explicit listing for a sponsor, double-check the URL to get an indication of what the source is. The following are types of website addresses with some explanation of what each is:

- .com indicates a commercial site
- .edu an educational one
- .org a nonprofit
- .gov a government sponsor
- .mil a military sponsor
- .net a network of sponsors

The end part of a URL may also tell you what country the website is coming from, such as .uk for the United Kingdom or .de for Germany.

A note on publication bias

You can find many articles indicating that a bias exists in academic publishing. This publication bias means that only certain types of research studies get published in academic journals. In the sciences, the publication bias favors studies that have positive results ("we got some results!") rather than negative results ("this did not work as we had hypothesized"). In the Arts and Humanities, some have argued that prestigious academic journals favor articles that come from professors at elite colleges and universities. Other speculation about publication bias in academic journals focuses on the bias in the peer reviewer: that a peer reviewer is more likely to accept an article for publication if that article confirms his or her own thinking.

Attributions

10.

READING GAMES: STRATEGIES FOR READING SCHOLARLY SOURCES

Karen Rosenberg

Abstract

Karen Rosenberg's essay "Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources" comes from the book *Writing Spaces.* Rosenberg shares her personal experiences as a student who needed to learn how to read academic material more effectively. She explains not only why professors ask you to read academic/scholarly journal articles (as opposed to simply using Google-able sources

for research projects), but also how you can strategically approach reading such complex texts to get the most out of them. Her tone is informal and conversational; she wants to connect with you in order to support your success even as you engage with source material.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

If at First You Fall Asleep . . .

During my first year in college, I feared many things: calculus, cafeteria food, the stained, sweet smelling mattress in the basement of my dorm.* But I did not fear reading. I didn't really think about reading at all, that automatic making of meaning from symbols in books, newspapers, on cereal boxes. And, indeed, some of my coziest memories of that bewildering first year involved reading. I adopted an overstuffed red chair in the library that enveloped me like the lap of a department store Santa. I curled up many evenings during that first, brilliant autumn with my English homework: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. I'd read a gorgeous passage, snuggle deeper into my chair, and glance out to the sunset and fall leaves outside of the library window. This felt deeply, unmistakably collegiate.

But English was a requirement—I planned to major in political science. I took an intro course my first semester and brought my readings to that same chair. I curled up, opened a book on the Chinese Revolution, started reading, and fell asleep. I woke up a little drooly, surprised at the harsh fluorescent light, the sudden pitch outside. Not to be deterred, I bit my lip and started over. I'd hold on for a paragraph or two, and then suddenly I'd be thinking about my classmate Joel's elbows, the casual way he'd put them on the desk when our professor lectured, sometimes resting his chin in his hands. He was a long limbed runner and smelled scrubbed—a mixture of laundry detergent and shampoo. He had black hair and startling blue eyes. Did I find him sexy?

Crap! How many paragraphs had my eyes grazed over while I was thinking about Joel's stupid elbows? By the end of that first semester, I abandoned ideas of majoring in political science. I vacillated between intense irritation with my assigned readings and a sneaking suspicion that perhaps the problem was me—I was too dumb to read academic texts. Whichever it was—a problem with the readings or with me—I carefully chose my classes so that I could read novels, poetry, and plays for credit. But even in my English classes, I discovered, I had to read dense scholarly articles. By my Junior year, I trained myself to spend days from dawn until dusk hunkered over a carrel in the library's basement armed with a dictionary and a rainbow of highlighters. Enjoying my reading seemed hopelessly naïve—an indulgence best reserved for beach blankets and bathtubs. A combination of obstinacy, butt-numbingly hard chairs, and caffeine helped me survive my scholarly reading assignments. But it wasn't fun.

Seven years later I entered graduate school. I was also working and living on my own, cooking for myself instead of eating off cafeteria trays. In short, I had a life. My days were not the blank canvas they had been when I was an undergraduate and could sequester myself in the dungeon of the library basement. And so, I finally learned how to read smarter, not harder. Perhaps the strangest part of my reading transformation was that I came to *like* reading those dense scholarly articles; I came to crave the process of sucking the marrow from the texts. If you can relate to this, if you also love wrestling with academic journal articles, take joy in arguing with authors in the margins of the page, I am not writing for you.

However, if your reading assignments confound you, if they send you into slumber, or you avoid them, or they seem to take you way too long, then pay attention. Based on my experience as a frustrated student and now as a teacher of reading strategies, I have some insights to share with you designed to make the reading process more productive, more interesting, and more enjoyable.

Joining the Conversation[1]

Even though it may seem like a solitary, isolated activity, when you read a scholarly work, you are participating in a conversation. Academic writers do not make up their arguments off the top of their heads (or solely from creative inspiration). Rather, they look at how others have approached similar issues and problems. Your job—and one for which you'll get plenty of help from your professors and your peers—is to locate the writer and yourself in this larger conversation. Reading academic

1. In this discussion I draw on Norgaard's excellent discussion of reading as joining a conversation (1–28). By letting you, the reader, know this in a footnote, I am not only citing my source (I'd be plagiarizing if I didn't mention this somewhere), but I'm also showing how I enter this conversation and give you a trail to follow if you want to learn more about the metaphor of the conversation. Following standard academic convention, I put the full reference to Norgaard's text at the end of this article, in the references.

texts is a deeply social activity; talking with your professors and peers about texts can not only help you understand your readings better, but it can push your thinking and clarify your own stances on issues that really matter to you.

In your college courses, you may have come across the term "rhetorical reading."[2] Rhetoric in this context refers to how texts work to persuade readers—a bit different from the common connotation of empty, misleading, or puffed up speech. Rhetorical reading refers to a set of practices designed to help us understand how texts work and to engage more deeply and fully in a conversation that extends beyond the boundaries of any particular reading. Rhetorical reading practices ask us to think deliberately about the role and relationship between the writer, reader, and text.

When thinking about the writer, we are particularly interested in clues about the writer's motivation and agenda. If we know something about what the writer cares about and is trying to accomplish, it can help orient us to the reading and understand some of the choices the writer makes in his or her work.

As readers, our role is quite active. We pay attention to our own motivation and agenda for each reading. On one level, our motivation may be as simple as wanting to do well in a class, and our agenda may involve wanting to understand as much as necessary in order to complete our assignments. In order to meet these goals, we need to go deeper, asking, "Why is my professor asking me to read

2. I draw on—and recommend—Rounsaville et al.'s discussion of rhetorical sensitivity, critical reading and rhetorical reading (1–35).

this piece?" You may find clues in your course syllabus, comments your professor makes in class, or comments from your classmates. If you aren't sure why you are being asked to read something, ask! Most professors will be more than happy to discuss in general terms what "work" they want a reading to do—for example, to introduce you to a set of debates, to provide information on a specific topic, or to challenge conventional thinking on an issue.

Finally, there is the text—the thing that the writer wrote and that you are reading. In addition to figuring out *what* the text says, rhetorical reading strategies ask us to focus on *how* the text delivers its message. In this way of thinking about texts, there is not one right and perfect meaning for the diligent reader to uncover; rather, interpretations of the reading will differ depending on the questions and contexts readers bring to the text.

Strategies for Rhetorical Reading

Here are some ways to approach your reading that better equip you for the larger conversation. First, consider the **audience**. When the writer sat down to write your assigned reading, to whom was he or she implicitly talking? Textbooks, for the most part, have students like you in mind. They may be boring, but you've probably learned what to do with them: pay attention to the goals of the chapter, check out the summary at the end, ignore the text in the boxes because it's usually more of a "fun fact" than something that will be on the test, and so on. Magazines in the checkout line at the supermarket also have you in mind: you can't help but notice headlines about who is cheating or fat or anorexic or suicidal.

Writers of scholarly sources, on the other hand, likely don't think much about you at all when they sit down to write. Often, academics write primarily for other academics. But just because it's people with PhDs writing for other people with PhDs doesn't mean that you should throw in the towel. There's a formula for these types of texts, just like there's a formula for all the *Cosmo* articles that beckon with titles that involve the words "hot," "sex tips," "your man," and "naughty" in different configurations.

It's just that the formula is a little more complicated.

The formula also changes depending on the flavor of study (physics, management, sociology, English, etc.) and the venue. However, if you determine that the audience for your reading is other academics, recognize that you are in foreign territory. You won't understand all of the chatter you hear on street corners, you may not be able to read the menus in the restaurants, but, with a little practice, you will be able to find and understand the major road signs, go in the right direction, and find your way.

How can you figure out the primary audience? First, look at the publication venue. (Here, to some extent, you can judge a book by its cover). If the reading comes from an academic journal, then chances are good that the primary audience is other academics. Clues that a journal is academic (as opposed to popular, like *Time* or *Newsweek*) include a citation format that refers to a volume number and an issue number, and often this information appears at the top or bottom of every page. Sometimes you can tell if a reading comes from an academic journal based on the title—e.g., do the *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* or *Qualitative*

Research in Psychology sound like they are written for a popular audience? What if you're still not sure? Ask your reference librarians, classmates, your instructor, or friends and family who have more experience with these types of readings than you do.

There are two implications that you should be aware of if you are not the primary audience for a text. First, the author will assume prior knowledge that you likely don't have. You can expect sentences like "as Durkheim has so famously argued . . ." or "much ink has been spilled on the implications of the modernization hypothesis" where you have no idea who Durkheim is or what the modernization hypothesis says. That's OK. It might even be OK to not look these things up at all and still get what you need from the reading (but you won't know that yet). In the first reading of an article, it's smart to hold off on looking too many things up. Just be prepared to face a wall of references that don't mean a whole lot to you.

Second, if you're not the primary audience, don't be surprised if you find that the writing isn't appealing to you. Whereas a novelist or a magazine writer works hard to draw us in as readers, many academic authors don't use strategies to keep us hooked. In fact, many of these strategies (use of sensory language, suspense, etc.) would never get published in academic venues. By the same token, you'll use very different strategies to read these scholarly texts.

You may be wondering, if you're not the intended audience for the text, why do you have to read it in the first place? This is an excellent question, and one that you need to answer before you do your reading. As I mentioned earlier in the discussion of the role of the reader, you may need to do a little sleuthing to figure this out. In addition to the suggestions I provided earlier, look to your course notes and syllabus for answers. Often professors will tell you why they assign specific readings. Pay attention—they will likely offer insights on the context of the reading and the most important points. If after all of this, you still have no idea why you're supposed to read six articles on the history of Newtonian physics, then ask your professor. Use the answers to help you focus on the really important aspects of the texts and to gloss over the parts that are less relevant to your coursework. If you remain confused, continue to ask for clarification. Ask questions in class (your classmates will be grateful). Go to office hours. Most faculty love the opportunity to talk about readings that they have chosen with care.

Once you have an idea who the intended audience is for the article and why you are assigned to read it, don't sit down and read the article from start to finish, like a good mystery. Get a lay of the land before you go too deep. One way to do this is to study the architecture of the article. Here are some key components to look for:

The title. As obvious as it sounds, pay attention to the title because it can convey a lot of information that can help you figure out how to read the rest of the article more efficiently. Let's say that I know my reading will be about the Russian Revolution. Let's say I even know that it will be about the role of music in the Russian Revolution. Let's say the title is "'Like the beating of my heart': A discourse analysis of Muscovite musicians' letters during the Russian Revolution." This tells me not only the subject matter of the article (something about letters Russian musicians wrote during the Revolution) but it also tells me something about the methodology, or the way that the author approaches the subject matter. I might not know exactly what discourse analysis is, but I can guess that you can do it to letters and that I should pay particular attention to it when the author mentions it in the article. On the other hand, if the title of the article were "Garbage cans and metal pipes: Bolshevik music and the politics of proletariat propaganda" I would know to look out for very different words and concepts. Note, also, that the convention within some academic disciplines to have a pretty long title separated by a colon usually follows a predictable pattern. The text to the left of the colon serves as a teaser, or as something to grab a reader's attention (remember that the author is likely not trying to grab your attention, so you may not find these teasers particularly effective—though it is probably packed with phrases that would entice someone who already studies the topic). The information to the right of the colon typically is a more straightforward explanation of what the article is about.

The abstract. Not all of your readings will come with abstracts, but when they do, pay close attention. An abstract is like an executive summary. Usually one paragraph at the beginning of an article, the abstract serves to encapsulate the main points of the article. It's generally a pretty specialized summary that seeks to answer specific questions. These include: the main problem or question, the approach (how did the author(s) do the work they write about in the article?), the shiny new thing that this article does (more on this later, but to be published in an academic journal you often need to argue that you are doing something that has not been done before), and why people who are already invested in this field should care (in other words, you should be able to figure out why another academic should find the article important). The abstract often appears in database searches, and helps scholars decide if they want to seek out the full article.

That's a whole lot to accomplish in one paragraph.

As a result, authors often use specialized jargon to convey complex ideas in few words, make assumptions of prior knowledge, and don't worry much about general readability. Abstracts, thus, are generally dense, and it's not uncommon to read through an abstract and not have a clue about what you just read. This is a good place to re-read, highlight, underline, look up what you don't know. You still may not have a firm grasp on everything in the abstract, but treat the key terms in the abstract like parts of a map when you see them in the main text, leading you to treasure: understanding the main argument.

The introduction. The introduction serves some of the same functions as the abstract, but there is a lot more breathing room here. When I started reading academic texts, I'd breeze through the introduction to get to the "meat" of the text. This was exactly the wrong thing to do. I can't remember how many times I'd find myself in the middle of some dense reading, perhaps understanding the content of a particular paragraph, but completely unable to connect that paragraph with the overall structure of the article. I'd jump from the lily pad of one paragraph to the next, continually fearful that I'd slip off and lose myself in a sea of total confusion (and I often did slip).

If the author is doing her/his job well, the introduction will not only summarize the whole piece, present the main idea, and tell us why we should care, but it will also often offer a road map for the rest of the article. Sometimes, the introduction will be called "introduction," which makes things easy. Sometimes, it's not. Generally, treat the first section of an article as the introduction, regardless if it's explicitly called that or not.

There are times where your reading will have the introduction chopped off. This makes your work harder. The two most common instances of introduction-less readings are assigned excerpts of articles and lone book chapters. In the first case, you only have a portion of an article so you cannot take advantage of many of the context clues the writer set out for readers. You will need to rely more heavily on the context of your course in general and your assignment in particular to find your bearings here. If the reading is high stakes (e.g., if you have to write a paper or take an exam on it), you may want to ask your professor how you can get the whole article. In the second case, your professor assigns a chapter or two from the middle of an academic book. The chapter will hopefully contain some introductory material (and generally will include much more than the middle of a journal article), but you will likely be missing some context clues that the author included in the introduction to the whole book. If you have trouble finding your footing here, and it's important that you grasp the meaning and significance of the chapter, seek out the book itself and skim the introductory chapter to ground you in the larger questions that the author is addressing. Oddly, even though you'll be doing more reading, it may save you time because you can read your assigned chapter(s) more efficiently.

Roadmaps included in the introduction are often surprisingly straightforward. They often are as simple as "in the first section, we examine . . . in the second section we argue . . ." etc. Search for these maps. Underline them. Highlight them. Go back to them when you find your comprehension slipping.

Section headings. A section heading serves as a title for a particular part of an article. Read all of these to get a sense of the trajectory of the text before delving into the content in each section (with the exception of the introduction and the conclusion which you should read in detail). Get a passing familiarity with the meanings of the words in the section headings—they are likely important to understanding the main argument of the text.

Conclusion. When writing papers, you've likely heard the cliché "in the introduction, write what you will say, then say it, then write what you just said." With this formula, it would seem logical to gloss over the conclusion, because, essentially, you've already read it already. However, this is not the case. Instead, pay close attention to the conclusion. It can help you make sure you understood the introduction. Sometimes a slight re-phrasing can help you understand the author's arguments in an important, new way. In addition, the conclusion is often where authors indicate the limitations of their work, the unanswered questions, the horizons left unexplored. And this is often the land of exam and essay questions . . . asking you to extend the author's analysis beyond its own shores.

At this point, you have pored over the title, the introduction, the section headings, and the conclusion. You haven't really read the body of the article yet. Your next step is to see if you can answer the question: what is **the main argument or idea** in this text?

Figuring out the main argument is the *key* to reading the text effectively and efficiently. Once you can identify the main argument, you can determine how much energy to spend on various parts of the reading. For example, if I am drowning in details about the temperance movement in the United States in the 19th Century, I need to know the main argument of the text to know if I need to slow down or if a swift skim will do. If the main argument is that women's organizing has taken different forms in different times, it will probably be enough for me to understand that women organized against the sale and consumption of alcohol. That might involve me looking up "temperance" and getting the gist of women's organizing. However, if the main argument were that scholars have misunderstood the role of upper class white women in temperance organizing in Boston from 1840–1865, then I would probably need to slow down and pay closer attention.

Unless the reading is billed as a review or a synthesis, the only way that an academic text can even get published is if it claims to argue something new or different. However, unlike laundry detergent or soft drinks, academic articles don't advertise what makes them new and different in block letters inside cartoon bubbles. In fact, finding the main argument can sometimes be tricky. Mostly, though, it's just a matter of knowing where to look. The abstract and the introduction are the best places to look first. With complicated texts, do this work with your classmates, visit your campus writing center (many of them help with reading assignments), or drag a friend into it.

Once you understand the different parts of the text and the writer's main argument, use this information to see how and where you can enter the conversation. In addition, keep your own agenda as a reader in mind as you do this work.

Putting It All Together

Collectively, these suggestions and guidelines will help you read and understand academic texts. They ask you to bring a great deal of awareness and preparation to your reading—for example, figuring out who the primary audience is for the text and, if you are not that audience, why your professor is asking you to read it anyway. Then, instead of passively reading the text from start to finish, my suggestions encourage you to pull the reading into its constituent parts—the abstract, the introduction, the section headings, conclusion, etc.—and read them unevenly and out of order to look for the holy grail of the main argument. Once you have the main argument you can make wise decisions about which parts of the text you need to pore over and which you can blithely skim. The final key to reading smarter, not harder is to make it social. When you have questions, ask. Start conversations with your professors about the reading. Ask your classmates to work with you to find the main arguments. Offer a hand to your peers who are drowning in dense details. Academics write to join scholarly conversations. Your professors assign you their texts so that you can join them too.

Discussion

1. Pick one reading strategy above that you may have used in reading a text previously (like paying close attention to the introduction of a book, chapter, or article). Discuss the ways in which this strategy worked for you and/or didn't work for you. Would you recommend friends use this strategy? (How) might you amend it, and when might you use it again?
2. The author writes in several places about reading academic texts as entering a conversation. What does this mean to you? How can you have a conversation with a text?
3. How might the reading strategies discussed in this article have an impact on your writing? Will you be more aware of your introduction, conclusion, and clues you leave throughout the text for readers? Talk with other writers to see what they may have learned about writing from this article on reading strategies.

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Keywords

audience, **academic**, **critical reading**, reading, reading to write, active reading, reading as joining a conversation, rhetorical reading, **discourse**, prior knowledge

Author Bio

Karen Rosenburg is the Director of the Writing & Communication Center at the University of Washington Bothell. She received her PhD from the University of Washington. Rosenburg describes her work at the Writing & Communication Center in the following way: "As the Director of the Writing Center, I have the great privilege of supporting students and faculty in creating productive spaces to explore, revise, and re-imagine their writing and communication practices. I support students through in-class workshops, teaching, and directing the Center. I support faculty through consultations on course design topics such as creating effective writing assignments, appropriate assessments, and innovative ways of integrating writing into courses."

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "Reading Games:

11.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "READING IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO WRITING INSTRUCTION"

Julie Myatt

Abstract

Julie Myatt's essay "Reading is Not Essential to Writing Instruction" comes from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing.* Myatt's argument in this essay is the opposite of her title, "Reading is Not Essential to Writing Instruction." She addresses the necessary connections between reading

and writing for both students and faculty in writing classes.

This reading is available below and as a PDF, or listen to Kyle Stedman's audio-version of this text.

Writing teachers are fond of the adage "good readers are good writers," but those same teachers frequently fail to assume responsibility for teaching students how to read. This often manifests itself in teaching only surface-level reading strategies in K–12 such as skimming and reading for the gist, and in cries of, "They should know this stuff before they get here!" at the university level. This abdication of responsibility has far-reaching effects for students, particularly those from underserved populations, leading them to believe they are poor readers rather than people who have not been taught to read deeply, thus potentially limiting their abilities to compete in a market characterized by ever-changing and increasingly competitive workplace literacies. This oversight is not malicious in intent but rather is the product of four key issues:

First, there exists an educational culture that privileges testing over sustained and meaningful encounters with texts. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation resulted in widespread testing that became a formidable obstacle to helping students develop deep reading skills. As teachers understandably grew fearful about losing their jobs because of low test scores, they devoted class time to preparing students for the tests rather than developing practices that would have helped students improve as readers and writers. Standardized tests often rely on multiple-choice responses that neither allow for complexity of thought nor invite students to draw connections between the text under consideration and their own experiences. In the era of NCLB, these tests typically required readings of short, acontextual passages generated by the testing companies instead of existing publications that, when paired with the right questions, could have allowed students to draw meaningful connections between the larger cultural context and the choices the author made in constructing the text. For example, an English III (junior-level) practice test published by Pearson for the State of Tennessee Department of Education in 2012 included 49 multiple-choice questions asking students to identify correct punctuation, combine or rearrange sentences, and determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary. The practice test prompted students to demonstrate reading proficiency by identifying the main idea of a passage, evaluating forms of evidence, and assessing a source's validity, but nowhere were students asked to demonstrate their ability to "analyze texts to identify the author's attitudes, viewpoints, and beliefs and to critique how these relate to the larger historical, social, and cultural contexts of the texts," even though this kind of rhetorical reading was, as evident on a teacher webpage, identified as a course-level expectation in the Tennessee Language Arts Standards. Students may not have had sufficient engagement of this sort with text because the acontextual, ahistorical test-generated passages did not invite rhetorical reading.

Second, there have been longstanding debates in the field of composition studies about the purpose of first-year composition (FYC), the writing course required of almost all university students, including what role reading should play in the teaching of writing. Ellen C. Carillo explains in *Securing a Place for Reading in Composition* that reading instruction hasn't been as prominent a feature of the first-year writing classroom as it should have been largely because of debates in the field about what kinds of readings should be assigned. Probably the most famous debate surrounding reading in the writing classroom (known as the Tate–Lindemann debate) addressed the issue of whether or not literary texts are appropriate for use in FYC. In this exchange, Gary Tate represented the position that FYC should exclude no texts, articulating his commitment to preparing students for the conversations they would have in their lives beyond the university and his concerns that in its emphasis on academic discourse, FYC had become a service course for other academic disciplines. Erika Lindemann proposed that the purpose of FYC is to introduce students to academic and professional discourse through a rhetorical approach to writing, complete with instruction in genre, style, purpose, and audience. Lindemann expressed concerns that using literature in the composition classroom relegated student writing to the margins and reduced the academy to one genre—the essay—thus failing to prepare students for future writing tasks. Both Carillo and Sharon Crowley characterize this debate as a product of tensions surrounding the uneasy relationship between FYC and literature. Distancing the composition classroom from literature left reading out in the cold, resulting in less attention to reading instruction in the FYC classroom. Though many composition studies scholars would contend that differentiating what happens in FYC from what occurs in a literature course was a necessary step in the development of our discipline, it appears that in the process of defining ourselves, we lost sight of how very important reading instruction is to the teaching of writing.

Third, there is a lack of recent research on reading in the field of composition studies and a gap in teacher training, particularly at the university level. The majority of research on reading in the field of composition was published over 20 years ago. As a result, those teaching introductory writing classes are, as Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem note, seldom introduced to theories of teaching reading, so they do not feel equipped to make explicit reading instruction part of their teaching. Carillo calls this "a pedagogical gap" in which "instructors lack the resources to develop reading pedagogies that will complement their writing pedagogies."

Finally, there have been unrealistic demands placed on FYC instructors charged with preparing students to conduct research and write in all disciplines. Many people, among them university faculty outside of composition, tend to expect FYC—in the course of just one or two semesters—to remake students into writers capable of conducting research and writing for their chosen f ields of study. Though scholars such as Elizabeth Wardle have challenged the notion that FYC should prepare students for work in their disciplines, arguing instead that the course should expose students to theories of writing so they can understand how writing works, the course remains overburdened, with reading increasingly neglected. This FYC-as-general-academic-literacyinoculation encourages students to view reading as just another requirement, rather than as an opportunity for discovery and an important form of knowledge making. Take, for example, the research paper, a staple in this model of FYC. All too often, this assignment has no audience other than the teacher, no purpose beyond earning a grade, leaving students with little motivation to locate quality sources and use them thoughtfully.

Misconceptions about what writing is and debates about the purpose of FYC distract from what should be writing teachers' primary goal, what Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak have in their book *Writing Across Contexts* characterized as teaching students to think like writers. An important part of that is teaching students how to read like writers, as Mike Bunn illustrates in "How to Read Like a Writer." Despite instructors' recognition that reading and writing are interconnected, reading instruction all too often receives short shrift in the writing classroom, with instructors failing to offer explicit instruction in a variety of reading strategies, instead promoting content-based readings that emphasize a text's meaning over attention to how it was constructed. Worse yet, instructors may even supply the meaning for students, many of whom expect their instructors to do just that.

The emphasis on content-based readings that resemble literary analysis is a product of instructors' own familiarity with literary analysis, as those teaching writing are often former English majors who tend to be more well-versed in literary critiques (in which the emphasis is on what is written in a fictional text) than in rhetorical analyses (in which the emphasis is on the choices the writer made in attempting to achieve a particular purpose and how those choices influence the ways various audiences respond to the text).

Composition scholars readily agree that students need to be taught how to write rather than merely be tasked with writing. High school English language arts teacher and author Kelly Gallagher argues that the same is true of reading: "If we simply assign reading instead of teaching students how to read, we'll get poor reading"—and, I would add, poor writing. So what exactly should reading instruction involve? To demystify reading and support students in learning to read like writers, writing teachers must:

- Introduce students to the concept that reading, like writing, is a recursive process, meaning that the act of reading is not linear or straightforwardly sequential but instead demands that readers revisit various points in their reading multiple times throughout the process;
- Acknowledge their reading difficulties and guide students in assessing their own reading struggles;
- Share strategies and provide heuristics—or interactive techniques that promote discovery—that help students read actively, work through confusion, make inferences, and connect the text to their own experiences and ideas (see, for example, Mike Bunn's "How to Read Like a Writer");

- Promote collaboration that gets students talking about their reading experiences and exposes them to others' questions, perspectives, and interpretations;
- Assign a wide variety of texts students can use as models for their own writing;
- Guide students in reading rhetorically (analyzing texts not for meaning as one would in a literature class but rather to determine how and why the texts were constructed as they were by asking what the context surrounding the writing is, who the intended audience is, what the author's purpose is, and what effect the author's choices have on the audience);
- Invite students to ask questions of texts, both models and those they compose themselves, in order to consider what the author could have done differently, as well as how these changes could influence the reader's relationship to the text;
- Create a mechanism for students to reflect on their reading experiences, consider how their reading benefits their writing, and envision how the skills they are developing could be of use to them beyond the writing classroom.

Of course, even explicit reading instruction in a writing-intensive classroom will not benefit students fully if they are unable to recognize how their reading can help them improve as writers. Explicit writing instruction that makes students aware of the interconnected nature of reading and writing benefits students in numerous ways:

- It leads to increased investment where students are more likely to take responsibility for learning to read carefully and critically, thus gaining more from the learning experience.
- It helps students understand how to use sources in meaningful, responsible ways because students spend time building a relationship between the secondary sources they are reading and the research-based writing they produce.
- It helps students understand that writing is rarely formulaic due to the range of texts with differing rhetorical situations they might study in a reading–writing curriculum.
- It gives students models to emulate in their own writing due to this breadth of reading materials.
- It helps students draw from prior knowledge and transfer their skills in the future.

Several of the benefits described above run parallel to the *habits of mind* introduced in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project. These habits of mind include openness, engagement, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition, the latter of which is defined as thinking about one's thinking. These ways of approaching learning are important because the reality is that what occurs in the writing classroom is merely the beginning; for students to be successful in meeting the reading and writing demands of their future lives and careers, they must claim ownership over their own learning, be open to new possibilities, and be willing to adapt to the new situations they encounter.

By failing to give reading its due, we are blocking students' access to avenues of inquiry that would support their growth as readers, writers, and thinkers. In an era characterized by changing workplace literacies and the birth of new genres inspired by Web 2.0 technologies (such as wikis, blogs, and social networking sites), a flexible rhetorical education is more necessary than ever. The goal informing writing instruction at all levels should be for students to develop not only the skills that will serve them in the academic realm but also the ability to ask the questions and cultivate the behaviors that will allow them to respond effectively to the diverse composing contexts they will encounter in their future lives and careers beyond the classroom. Parents, students, and policymakers should expect reading, specifically reading actively, collaboratively, rhetorically, and with an eye toward one's own writing, to be a significant part of writing instruction at all levels.

Keywords

close reading, **metacognition**, **model texts**, reading rhetorically, recursive reading, **rhetorical genre studies**, standardized testing

Author Bio

Dr. Julie Myatt joined the faculty of Middle Tennessee State University in 2008. She currently serves as the Director of MT Engage. Before that, she was Co-Director of General Education English and GTA Coordinator for the English department. Dr. Myatt teaches first-year composition, sophomore literature, and graduate courses in composition. She is currently researching how children's picture books about divorce attend to the feelings of shame and isolation that divorcing parents and children often experience.

Attributions

12.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "READING AND WRITING ARE NOT CONNECTED"

Ellen C. Carillo

Abstract

Ellen C. Carillo's essay "Reading and Writing are not Connected" is from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing*. Carillo uses research to disprove the belief that reading is disconnected from writing. Instead, Carillo demonstrates how students in writing classes can benefit from thinking

and practices that consider the relationships between these two activities.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

Listen to Kyle Stedman's audio version of the text.

Since the 1950s we have been hearing that Johnny can't read. In 1975, *Newsweek* informed us that Johnny can't write, either. Over the years, a range of reasons for Johnny's illiteracy have been offered. Most recently, technology has been named one of the culprits. Johnny spends too much time on the computer and not enough time reading books. He spends so much time texting and tweeting that he has forgotten how to write correctly, how to spell, how to develop ideas in more than 140 characters. Public outcries about literacy (or lack thereof) often lead to a closer look at the education system. The public raises questions surrounding why colleges and universities in particular—where Johnny would be expected to gain in-depth and comprehensive literacy skills— are not doing a better job. What is often neglected in these public debates about the best way to teach literacy at the college level is that reading and writing are connected practices and, as such, the best way to teach them is together. It is a bad idea to continue privileging writing at the expense of reading.

This problematic separation of the connected practices of reading and writing is no longer an issue in students' early schooling, where they are taught reading and writing simultaneously. Although it took decades for elementary school teachers and curricula developers to realize that young children need not learn how to read before they learned how to write, language arts instructors now teach reading and writing alongside each other. They do so because research has shown that students learn to read and write better when they are instructed in both simultaneously. This research, for example, shows that students' phonic skills are reinforced when children practice both reading and writing the same words. As they get a little older, students begin to develop an awareness of genres or types of text, which, like the study of phonics, is also further reinforced by a concurrent focus on reading and writing. As students read (or are read to) they learn to recognize typical elements of fiction, which they then imitate in their own writing and stories. Even a two-year-old who has been read to consistently will recognize that "once upon a time" indicates the beginning of a story, and will often begin that same way when asked to make up his or her own.

By the time students arrive in college, stories beginning with "once upon a time" are long gone, and in their place are difficult and dense texts—often multimedia texts—from a range of fields each with its own set of conventions. Instead of drawing on models of early literacy education that focus on teaching reading and writing simultaneously, college and universities largely privilege writing over reading. This hierarchy is evidenced by the universal firstyear writing requirement in American colleges and universities, as well as by writing across the curriculum programs. The integrated approach to teaching reading and writing falls away to students' peril and causes great frustration in the professors who often attribute students' struggles in their courses to poor writing ability, when these problems are often related to students' reading difficulties. While students' eyes may make their way over every word, that does not mean that students have comprehended a text or that they are prepared to successfully complete the writing tasks associated with the reading, which often involve summary, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

More importantly, if students are not given the opportunity to continue working on their reading throughout their college careers, they may struggle analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating all that surrounds them since comprehension is a crucial step toward these more advanced interpretive practices. Students may lack the ability to read the world around them because they do not have the tools to recognize the values and assumptions that inform the images, advertisements, news stories, political campaigns, and ideas with which they come into contact on a daily basis. By not focusing on reading as an equally creative and active enterprise as writing—very much writing's counterpart in the creation of meaning—colleges and universities are potentially producing students, or citizens, who think reading is passive. These students might blindly accept whatever comes their way rather than actively engaging ideas, asking questions, and seeking out multiple perspectives.

Although writing is more often thought of as a creative act, reading is just as creative. When one writes, one is creating meaning by putting words and ideas together. When one reads, the same thing is happening. Although someone else has already put the words and ideas together, the reader interacts with those and creates meaning by bringing her perspective, personal experiences, and background to what literary scholar Louise Rosenblatt has called the transaction between the text and reader. This is why a few people might read the same novel but each take something different from it. That personal transaction with the text has affected how each reader creates meaning. When reading and writing are taught alongside each other in the college-level classroom, students can gain practice experiencing and relishing in opportunities to create meaning not just through writing, but through reading everything from print texts to art to websites to national news events, all of which they will continue to engage beyond school. Focusing on active reading approaches, including everything from comprehension strategies to ways of determining something's inherent values and biases to productive methods of responding, is crucial if students are going to leave postsecondary institutions prepared to be informed, aware, and engaged citizens.

Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of work to be done since recent studies such as The Citation Project, a multi-institutional, and empirical research project show that students' reading abilities are largely underdeveloped. This research seeks to understand how students read sources and use them in their writing. With less than 10% of students using summary in their writing (as opposed to paraphrasing, copying, and citing), scholar Rebecca Moore Howard and her colleagues noted that their findings raise questions about students' abilities to understand what they are reading. Recent studies from Education Testing Services have corroborated these findings as did findings from studies conducted by ACT, Inc. and the Pew Charitable Trust, which found that close to half of the college students in their samples did not meet minimum benchmarks for literacy or lacked reading proficiency. These deficiencies are major problems particularly in this digital age for, as literacy scholar Donald Leu and his colleagues have pointed out, foundational literacies such as reading and writing print text will continue to play a crucial role—and maybe even a more essential role—in this digital age because of the proliferation of information.

Because there is so much at stake, educators and the public must keep the connections between reading and writing in mind as we continue to engage in debates about the best practices for teaching literacy. The value of literacy undoubtedly extends far beyond school. To read and to write is to create, to interpret. If education is, in fact, a means to preparing citizens to function and participate within a democracy then reading and writing—and the interpretive skills they inculcate—are crucial. As research has shown, teaching them alongside each other reinforces both skills.

Even if we want to be a bit cynical and argue that postsecondary education has become nothing more than a necessary, but burdensome, step to gaining employment, both reading and writing are still just as important. A 2011 survey found that 86% of corporate recruiters said strong communication skills were a priority—well ahead of the next skill. In a 2013 survey of 318 employers published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 80% of employers said colleges should focus more on written and oral communication. In these and similar studies, communication is defined by reading and writing abilities. Employers want to hire people who can communicate effectively, and despite our culture's recent celebration of all things STEM, many employers continue to vocalize the importance of effective communication skills. Teaching reading and writing together will help students become more proficient in both.

Developing those communication skills means that those of us within education should look at the curricula we teach and/ or administer and ask ourselves if we have fallen into the trap of compartmentalizing reading and writing to the detriment of our students. If we have, we must ask ourselves: how might we better integrate attention to both reading and writing in order to enrich the literacy education we are providing? We must not assume that simply exposing students to texts of all kinds and across all media will automatically result in comprehension. Instructors must deliberately teach students how to actively read the words and images and, by extension, the world around them. Instructors must do so not only so students can succeed in their courses, but so that students can be prepared to actively engage in the complex interpretive work that is expected of citizens in an information-rich culture.

We are all encountering more text and visual images than ever before. There is a great deal at stake if we don't take the opportunity to teach active reading alongside writing. Instructors need to teach students different strategies for reading the complex texts they will encounter throughout their academic careers and in the world. One of these strategies might be rhetorical reading wherein readers pay particular attention to how a text is working on them, persuading them. A better understanding of this as a reader can also support students' writing as they develop their own arguments. Instructors might also provide a strategy such as reading like a writer, wherein readers notice the choices a writer has made and understands the relevance of those choices to their own writing. Without explicit attention to reading and the relationship between reading and writing, students will not have strategies for making sense of new or difficult texts, arguments, images, and ideas they encounter. Denying students the richness of an education that considers reading and writing alongside each other means denying them the opportunity to become as proficient as possible in these connected practices and, therefore, experience and practice the interpretive work that is specifically human.

Further Reading

For the media's contemporary coverage of the ongoing literacy crisis, see Sofia Westin's "Social Media Eroding Skills?" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*), the *Bloomberg News* report "U.S. Teens Report Decline in Writing Skills," and Michael Rosenwald's "Serious Reading Takes a Hit from Online Scanning and Skimming" (*The Washington Post*). For historical coverage of this phenomenon see Rudolf Fleisch's *Why Can't Johnny Read?* and Merrill Sheils's "Why Johnny Can't Write" (*Newsweek*).

For contemporary, scholarly approaches that emphasize the importance of simultaneous instruction in reading and writing, particularly at the postsecondary level, see Robert Scholes's "The Transition to College Reading," Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem's "Reading

Practices in the Writing Classroom," Alice S. Horning and Elizabeth Kraemer's *Reconnecting Reading and Writing*, David Jolliffe's "Learning to Read as Continuing Education," David Jolliffe and Allison Harl's "Studying the 'Reading Transition' from High School to College: What Are Our Students Reading and Why?," and Mike Bunn's "Motivation and Connection: Teaching Reading (and Writing) in the Composition Classroom."

Keywords

literacy acquisition, **literacy**, **new literacies**, **reading pedagogies**, reading wars, reading–writing connections

Author Bio

Ellen C. Carillo is associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut and the writing program administrator at its Waterbury campus. She is the author of Securing a Place for Reading in Composition: The Importance of Teaching for Transfer, as well as articles and chapters on the place of reading in the teaching of writing. Ellen has earned grants to conduct research on reading–writing connections in the classroom and regularly presents her findings and scholarship at national conferences. She is also a founding member and co-leader of "The Role of Reading in Composition Studies" special interest group, which meets at the Conference on College Composition and Communication's annual convention.

Attributions

13.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "RESEARCH STARTS WITH ANSWERS"

Alison C. Witte

Abstract

Alison C. Witte's essay from *Bad Ideas About Writing*, "Research Starts With Answers," suggests that research actually starts with questions. Sometimes we have a hypothesis, or we have some assumptions that we need to test with our research, but effective research can often surprise us and make us rethink our initial understandings.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

Listen to Kyle Stedman's audio-version of this text.

The research paper has become a rite of passage where students choose a topic (or are assigned one) about which they present a claim, and then look for ways to confirm it with evidence located through some ambiguous thing or process called research. One of the primary problems with the research paper is that it teaches students that to do research is to look things up—to use the library or the Internet. Skills for locating information are essential to being a successful researcher, as is familiarity with the library and the rich variety of sources available, but it represents only a small part of the research process.

So, what does it really mean to do research? Research is a three-stage process: (1) seeking information that is new to the researcher, (2) interpreting, evaluating, and organizing that information, and (3) reporting that information to others to affect some action. Richard Larson emphasizes that the nature of research is active. The researcher—whether student, academic, or professional— takes an active role in seeking. Seeking is not limited to locating what exists, but also extends to creating new data or information in service of answering a question or solving a problem.

Perhaps some of the confusion over the role of research in writing, and the writing process, comes from the structure of classical argument that is often included as part of the organizational pattern for the research paper. When argument is taught, it's frequently connected to the historical practices of Greek and Roman rhetoric. Rhetoric, the study of the ways to use language to persuade a listener, was one of the core subjects of formalized education in Greek and Roman times and was seen as a necessary component of democratic citizenship. The study of rhetoric focused on argument as an oral practice of making clear claims in an effort to persuade. Speakers would present their positions, respond to challenges to their positions, listen to speakers presenting opposing positions, challenge those positions, and adjust their own claims and approaches. Argument was the primary means of conducting governing and legal activities, so participants were expected to be knowledgeable in both the conventions of arguing and in possession of acceptable, logical evidence to support their claims. The process was messy, time-consuming, and in some cases, not the most efficient way to conduct business or legal proceedings. It was viewed as a dynamic interaction that involved speakers going back and forth, and sometimes round and round, in an effort to come to a conclusion. Classical argument, in its basic principles, was meant to be a continual process rather than strictly a completed product.

Oral argument was a cornerstone of university curricula through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and into the 18th century. Written forms of argumentation did not take precedence in university settings until the 1800s, and coinciding with increasing specialization found both within and outside of the university. The research paper replaced oral exams and public speaking as a measure of intellect; and it was initially successful at fostering and promoting the creation of knowledge in local communities. The use of the research paper proliferated until it became the primary genre students write—a genre less about creating knowledge and more about compiling it.

Subsequently, the research paper became a tool for teaching students how to use the library, find the right words, and skillfully search through the words of others. Such a task eliminates the writer's voice from the conversation—as they are not required to participate in the discussion of the subject at hand, but simply to report what others have said about it. Because they are not active participants in the conversation, when students are taught by their textbooks and teachers to make a claim supported by reasons at an early stage of developing their argument, they have no real stake in the claim they make, nor any real grounds for making such a claim. Their choices are often arbitrary and rote, based in what they believe they know, in what they are comfortable with, or in what they believe will lead to many easy-to-find, readily accessible sources. They see no purpose for their claim other than completing the assignment. Nonetheless, this claim becomes the thesis statement of the paper and is to be the foundation of the work that follows.

Teaching students the purpose of doing research is supporting an idea or belief one already holds is not teaching students about research. In fact, the name research paper is, in itself, misleading, as it implies that research is a practice only used in a particular genre or instance, rather than as a fundamental element of nearly all forms of academic, workplace, or personal writing. Researching isn't meant to be a narrow task of looking up information, but of creating and discovering new information in response to problems. Describing research in these limited terms does not prepare students to participate in actual research in their courses of study and in their professional fields.

A more useful approach to teaching students about research, and how to do research, begins with re-thinking how we define research and research skills. If research is the process by which a researcher seeks new information, makes sense of that information, and then reports that information to someone else, then research ought to begin with a question, not an answer. Students need to be taught not to look for answers, but to look for problems that need solving and for questions that need to be answered.

Rather than limiting the conception of research to a search for certain facts or pieces of evidence or to a trip to the library, it needs to include the processes of primary research—research collected directly by the researcher using tools he or she has designed to f ind the information needed to answer a particular question. I am not suggesting that secondary research—the locating of previously published materials—be eliminated, but that it not be presented as the paramount form of research, as is often done in the research paper. Secondary research is a key part of the research process and usually precedes any primary research. Once a researcher has a question, it's logical to see if and how others might have answered the same question. To be successful, students, and any researchers, must have a working knowledge of the question they are investigating. However, that information serves as a starting point for researchers, who then ask further questions to spur and design their own primary research.

Primary research provides students with opportunities to engage with people around them, to work collaboratively, to think critically about the best way to accomplish the task of getting the information they need to answer their questions, to learn how to manage and organize data, and to learn to interpret data. Because students need to work with people around them to develop ideas and locate problems to research and solve, primary research encourages students to see the ways in which research might help or benefit the people around them in their local communities. Additionally, working on primary research as a component of a class engages students with one another as they share their struggles, progress, and successes. They have the opportunity to learn both from their own experiences and each other. Students engaged in primary research also have to design their own tools (surveys, interview questions, experiments, etc.) to accomplish their particular goals. They can test versions and make modifications, adapting to changes in their research question, or problems that arise during the process. The need for such adaptability breaks students of the conception that there is a way to get the answers that they need, preparing them to be adaptable in situations beyond the classroom.

Once the definition of research shifts from information locating and idea confirmation to information generating and problem solving, the ways students write about research needs to change. The genre of the academic research report requires students to present the findings of their research in a clear, logical fashion, while also documenting their processes and opening their work to be critically examined by others. The research report also typically necessitates a literature review—a collection of published and cited research related to the topic at hand—that provides the impetus for the student's project and to show how the project extends what has already been done and provides new insight or knowledge. Thus, the research report gives students practice at both primary and secondary research, while allowing them to pursue genuine research questions.

Having students design and pursue genuine research projects that generate rather than simply locate information teaches them that research is about innovation—about doing what hasn't been done. It also demonstrates to them that research is a useful tool not only for learning, but also for action. Information gained from research can be used to impact their schools, homes, workplaces, and communities. Then, much as the ancient Greeks viewed classical argument as an essential part of citizenship, participating in genuine research and research writing becomes a key part of engaged and productive citizenship in the 21st century.

Keywords

argument, claim-based writing, classical argument, data-driven writing, research paper, research writing, **rhetoric**

Author Bio

Alison Witte is an associate professor of humanities and communication at Trine University in Angola, Indiana. She has been teaching research writing to college students for 10 years. She regularly teaches courses in research writing, research methods, technical writing, and advanced composition, and has co-developed curriculum for teaching research writing to international graduate students. She also chairs her university's Institutional Review Board, which reviews and approves all campus research projects with human participants. Her research interests include student research practices, digital pedagogy, digital pedagogy preparation, and non-classroom writing. Her twitter handle is @acwitte82.

Attributions

14.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "RESEARCH STARTS WITH A THESIS STATEMENT"

Emily A. Wierszewski

Abstract

Emily A. Wierszewski's essay "Research Starts with a Thesis Statement" comes from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing*. Wierszewski addresses the research process, why certain bad ideas get stuck in the public psyche, and offers more useful starting places for research.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

Listen to Kyle Stedman's audio version of this text.

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. (Alison Witte discusses this bad idea in a previous chapter.) 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 *the 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. In the book, *A Writing*

Process, author Vinetta Bell suggests that the thesis-writing process begins during the “preliminary research” stage. 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 U.S. space program in the mid-21st century, famously describes research as, “What I’m doing when I don’t know what I’m doing.” The understanding of research as discovery is echoed in the recent “Framework for Information Literacy in 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.” 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. Clark College's library website describes the research process as a daisy, rather than a line. Like a daisy's petals, research is 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 pre-existing 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 her pre-existing belief: that harsher penalties are needed. She would probably never be exposed to multiple perspectives on this complex issue, and the result would just be confirmation of her 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 traff icking—something she never even thought of before she did her research. When researchers do discover answers, they may f ind 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. Kenneth Burke, a philosopher and literary critic, explains the constructed nature of knowledge in his *unending conversation* metaphor. 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."

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 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.

Keywords

discovery, process, **research**, **thesis**, thesis-first research model

Author Bio

Emily Wierszewski has been teaching writing for over ten years, most recently at Seton Hill University outside of

Pittsburgh, PA. Her graduate work focused on nonfiction writing, including the study of what makes writing persuasive, as well as how people learn to read and write. As a professor, she's very interested in how her college students understand and have used the research process before coming to her class, including how their preconceptions about the purpose and process of research impact their attitudes toward and proficiency with college-level inquiry. She recently wrote a book chapter about how comics can help students more effectively engage with research in the writing classroom. Her Twitter handle is @ewazoo23.

Attributions

15.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION

Emilie Zickel

"I write out of ignorance. I write about the things I don't have any resolutions for, and when I'm finished, I think I know a little bit more about it. I don't write out of what I know. It's what I don't know that stimulates me." —Toni Morrison

Think of a research paper as an opportunity to deepen (or create!) knowledge about a topic that matters to you. Just as Toni Morrison was stimulated by what she didn't yet know, a research paper assignment can be interesting and meaningful if it allows you to explore what you don't know.

Research, at its best, is an act of knowledge creation, not just an extended book report. This knowledge creation is the essence of any great educational experience. Instead of being lectured at, you get to design the learning project that will ultimately result in you experiencing and then expressing your own intellectual growth. You get to read what you choose, and you get to become an expert on your topic.

That sounds, perhaps, like a lofty goal. But by spending some quality time **brainstorming**, reading, thinking or otherwise tuning into what matters to you, you can end up with a workable research topic that will lead you on an enjoyable research journey.

The best research topics are meaningful to you.

You will be spending a good chunk of time researching, reading, and writing about your topic. Therefore, it is important that you choose your topic strategically, and the following prompts may help you to do that:

- Choose a topic that you want to understand better.
- Choose a topic that you want to read about and devote time to.
- Choose a topic that is perhaps a bit out of your comfort zone.
- Choose a topic that allows you to understand others' opinions and how those opinions are shaped.
- Choose something that is relevant to you: personally or professionally.
- Do not choose a topic because you think it will be "easy"; those can end up being quite

challenging.

The video below offers ideas on choosing not only a topic that you are drawn to, but a topic that is realistic and manageable for a college writing class.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=131#oembed-1

It is best to brainstorm before deciding on a topic.

A good topic is one that moves you to think, to do, to want to know more, to want to say more. There are many ways to come up with a good topic. The best thing to do is to give yourself time to think about what you really want to commit days and weeks to reading, thinking, researching, and writing about. Consider the following questions that may help you arrive at a topic of interest:

- What news stories do you often see, but want to know more about?
- What would you love to become an expert on?
- What are you passionate about?
- What are you scared of?

- What problem in the world needs to be solved?
- What are the key controversies or current debates in the field of work that you want to go into?
- What is a problem that you see at work that needs to be better publicized or understood?
- What is the biggest issue facing [specific group of people: by age, by race, by gender, by ethnicity, by nationality, by geography, by economic standing? choose a group]?
- If you could interview anyone in the world, who would it be? Can identifying that person lead you to a research topic that would be meaningful to you?
- What area/landmark/piece of history in your home community are you interested in?
- What in the world makes you angry?
- What global problem do you want to better understand?
- What local problem do you want to better understand?
- Is there some element of the career that you would like to have one day that you want to better understand?
- Consider researching the significance of a song, or an artist, or a musician, or a novel/film/short story/comic, or an art form on some aspect of the broader culture.

- Think about something that has happened to (or is happening to) a friend or family member. Do you want to know more about this?
- Go to a news source (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, etc) and skim the titles of news stories. Does any story interest you?

From Topic to Research Question

Once you have decided on a research topic—an area for academic exploration that matters to you, it is time to start thinking about what you want to learn about that topic.

The goal of college level research assignments is never going to be to simply “go find sources” on your topic. Instead, think of sources as helping you to answer a **research question** or a series of research questions about your topic. These should not be simple questions with simple answers, but rather complex questions about which there is no easy or obvious answer.

A compelling research question is one that may involve controversy, or may have a variety of answers, or may not have any single, clear answer. All of that is okay and even desirable. If the answer is an easy and obvious one, then there is little need for argument or research.

Make sure that your research question is clear, specific, researchable, and limited (but not too limited). Most of all, make sure that you are curious about your own research question. If it does not matter to you, researching it will feel incredibly boring and tedious.

The video below includes a deeper explanation of what a good research question is as well as examples of strong research questions:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=131#oembed-2

Attributions

16.

WIKIPEDIA IS GOOD FOR YOU!?

James P. Purdy

Exercises

In his essay from *Writing Spaces*, "Wikipedia Is Good for You!?" James P. Purdy addresses multiple ways that Wikipedia can inform your research process. Of course, like all tools, Wikipedia is not useful in all contexts, but it can be a great starting place for research, and it can spur effective writing habits that you might choose to transfer to other classes and situations.

This reading is available below and as a [PDF.](#)

"I actually do think Wikipedia is an amazing thing. It is the first place I go when I'm looking for knowledge. Or when I want to create some." —Stephen Colbert

You may not realize it, but creating knowledge is one reason you are asked to do research-based writing[1] in college. And a popular resource you may already use can help you with this task—though perhaps not in the way you might initially think. Wikipedia, the free wiki "encyclopedia,"[2] can provide information to assist you with and model some of the activities frequently characteristic of college-level research-based writing. As with any resource you use, your success with Wikipedia depends on how and why you use it. The goal of this chapter is to show you how and why you might use Wikipedia to help you complete research-based writing

1. You may be familiar with the term research paper and may have been asked to write one for some of your classes. I don't use that term here, however. There are two primary reasons: (1) Research "papers" need not be papers anymore. That is, what you write need not be in the form of a print document. It might be a web site or a video or a poster or some other multimedia form. The term research paper doesn't encapsulate all these possibilities. (2) Research papers are often associated with presentations of what other people have written about a topic. When people hear research paper, in other words, they often think of compiling what other authoritative, smart people have to say about a topic and calling it a day. The kind of writing you are asked to do in college, however, requires more than that. It asks for your response to and application of what others have written. You need to do something with the sources you read (other than just string together quotes from them in your paper). So instead of research paper, I use research-based writing. This term emphasizes the activity (writing) rather than the medium (paper). This term also presents research as the basis (research-based), a beginning rather than an end.

2. I put the word "encyclopedia" in quotation marks because I argue that calling Wikipedia an encyclopedia and evaluating it based on the standards of print-based encyclopedias misrepresents the way it works (see Purdy W352, W357, W365).

tasks for your first year composition class. It offers suggestions for two ways to use—and not to use—Wikipedia. The first is as a source. The second is as a process guide.

My premise for the first is that you are going to use Wikipedia as a source for writing assignments regardless of cautions against it, so it is more helpful to address ways to use it effectively than to ignore it (and ignoring it precludes some potentially beneficial uses of Wikipedia anyway). My premise for the second is that, as I argue elsewhere, Wikipedia can reinforce approaches to research-based writing that many composition teachers support. Wikipedia, that is, can help to illustrate (1) recursive revision based on idea development, (2) textual production based on participation in a conversation rather than isolated thinking, and (3) research based on production rather than only critique (Purdy). The process of successfully contributing to a Wikipedia article, in other words, parallels the process of successfully creating a piece of research-based writing. Both involve putting forth ideas in writing and developing them in response to feedback based on audience members' perceptions of the usefulness, accuracy, and value of those ideas.

I offer two caveats before I proceed. All first year writing instructors teach research-based writing differently and ask you to produce different kinds of texts for assignments, so you will need to adapt the suggestions offered in this essay for your particular course and assignment. My goal is not to mandate one correct, universally applicable process of research-based writing. There is none. Nor is it to claim that products of research-based writing should look like a Wikipedia article. They should not. Wikipedia articles are a different genre than academic research-based writing. Wikipedia seeks to emulate an encyclopedia (that's where the "pedia" part of the name comes from) and, thereby, requires that articles be written in what it calls "NPOV," or neutral point of view; articles are intended to represent all significant sides of a topic rather than to persuade readers to believe one is correct (Bruns 113–114, "Wikipedia:Neutral"). Research-based writing assignments in first year composition commonly ask you to advance and develop your own argument on a topic by drawing on and responding to relevant outside sources. While you may be asked to represent multiple views on a topic for such an assignment, you will frequently be asked to argue for one, so your writing will likely be more overtly persuasive than a Wikipedia article.

Despite these important differences, I believe that some of the practices often involved in successfully writing a Wikipedia article are also often involved in successfully writing a research-based text for college classes: reviewing, conversing, revising, and sharing. As Australian scholar Axel Bruns asserts, "Wikipedia . . . is closely aligned with the live processes of academic exchanges of knowledge" (208, italics in original). Thus, this chapter proceeds with the assumption that it is useful to consider Wikipedia as both a product (i.e., a source) and a representation of process (i.e., a guide to practices).

Using Wikipedia as a Source

The first way you may think to use Wikipedia is as a source—that is, as a text you can quote or paraphrase in a paper. After all, Wikipedia is easy to access and usually pretty easy to understand. Its articles are often current and frequently provide interesting facts and information that can support your ideas. What's not to like?

Usually teachers do not like two primary aspects of Wikipedia. The first is its open participation: anyone, regardless of background, qualifications, or expertise, can write Wikipedia articles. As a result, articles can display incorrect information. There are many examples of such incorrect information on Wikipedia. Perhaps the most infamous involves the Wikipedia article on John Seigenthaler (former journalist, political advisor, and father of the reporter of the same name on NBC news). Brian Chase changed the article to indicate that Seigenthaler played a role in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert. This untrue contribution lasted for 132 days (Page, "Wikipedia Biography"). Seigenthaler was understandably upset, which he reported vociferously in an article in *USA Today* (Seigenthaler). Were someone to take Wikipedia's John Seigenthaler[3] article at face value during this time, she or he would come to the wrong conclusion about Seigenthaler. If you quote or paraphrase a Wikipedia article as an authoritative source, then, you are potentially making a claim based on wrong information, and using incorrect information is not a good way to make a convincing argument. Of course, misinformation isn't limited to Wikipedia. As Jim Giles reports in *Nature*, Encyclopaedia Britannica has errors in some of its articles, too; he claims that Wikipedia is almost as accurate as

3. For clarity, I italicize the names of Wikipedia articles in this chapter.

Britannica for a series of articles on science topics (900–901; see also Bruns 127–133, Levinson 93). You should, therefore, read critically all sources, not just Wikipedia articles. It's always a good idea to verify information in multiple sources. To ensure a better chance of accuracy, though, college-level research- based writing assignments generally ask you to use sources written by academic professionals and recognized experts.

The second aspect of Wikipedia that many teachers do not like is its changeability: Wikipedia articles do not remain the same over time. The *Michael Jackson* article makes this explicit. Its 19:35, 27 June 2009 version begins with a header: "**This article is about a person who has recently died.** Some information, such as that pertaining to the circumstances of the person's death and surrounding events, may change rapidly as more facts become known" (emphasis in original). As this notice implies, the article didn't stay the same for long given the unfolding details of Jackson's death. As a result of such changeability, Wikipedia articles are unreliable; the article you cite today may not exist in that form tomorrow. This variability challenges prevailing understanding of how published texts work so causes some anxiety. Because print texts are (relatively) stable, we expect texts we read (and cite) to be the same when we go back to them later. Even Wikipedia contributors express worry about the implications of article changeability for citation:

> Among other problems . . . if several authors cite the same Wikipedia article, they may all cite different versions, leading to complete confusion. That just linking to the article sans version information is not enough can be seen by those Wikipedia articles themselves which refer to

> others, where it is clear from following the link that a different version was referred to (and there is no clue which of the many versions in the history was actually read by the person who cited it). ("Why Wikipedia Is Not So Great")

As Wikipedians explain, article variability makes citing hard because it is difficult for readers to know which version of a Wikipedia article an author cited. And academic audiences like to be able to return to the texts you cite to verify the conclusions you draw from them. If the texts you cite don't exist anymore, they cannot do that.

Teachers have concerns about you using Wikipedia as a source for another reason—one that has less to do with Wikipedia itself and more to do with the kinds of texts you are expected to use in research-based writing. Most college-level writing asks you to engage more deeply with a subject than does an encyclopedia, and doing so entails reading more than the general overview of a topic that encyclopedia articles provide.[4] So articles from any encyclopedia are not usually good sources to quote, paraphrase, or summarize in your writing. Indeed, in response to Middlebury College's history department officially banning students from using Wikipedia as a source in their papers, Sandra Ordonez, a spokesperson for Wikipedia, and Roy Rosenzweig, Director of the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, agreed "the real problem is one of college students using encyclopedias when they should be using more advanced

4. That Wikipedia provides the same shallow coverage as other encyclopedias, or even that it should be considered an encyclopedia, is debatable (Bruns 101–133, Levinson 95–98). Nonetheless, its prevailing classification as an encyclopedia raises concern.

sources" (Jaschik n. pag.). If you wouldn't cite an encyclopedia article in a project, then citing a Wikipedia article likely isn't a good idea either.

Because of their open participation, unreliability, and (potentially) shallow topic coverage, you generally should not cite Wikipedia articles as authoritative sources in college-level writing. This does not mean that Wikipedia is not useful, or that you cannot read it, or that you should not cite it if you do use it. It does mean that Wikipedia is better used in other ways.

Using Wikipedia as a Starting Place

There are productive ways to use Wikipedia. In fact, Wikipedia can be a good source in three different ways. Rather than a source to cite, it can be a source of (1) ideas, (2) links to other texts, and (3) search terms.

To use Wikipedia as a source of ideas, read the Wikipedia article on your topic when you begin a research-based writing project to get a sense of the multiple aspects or angles you might write about. Many Wikipedia articles include a table of contents and headings that provide multiple lenses through which you might frame an argument (e.g., origins, history, economics, impact, production). Looking at the table of contents and headings can help you view your topic from vantage points you might not otherwise consider and can give you directions to pursue and develop in your writing.

You can also use Wikipedia as a gateway to other texts to consult for your research. Wikipedia's Verifiability Policy requires that material posted to articles be verifiable—that is, be cited (Bruns 114, "Wikipedia:Verifiability")—so articles include bibliographies, as shown in figure 1. They also frequently include "further reading," "external link," or "see also" lists, as shown in figure 2. These lists provide the names of—and often direct links to—other sources. Take advantage of these leads. When you have decided on a topic and are searching for sources to develop and support your thinking, look at these references, external links, and further reading lists. Wikipedia's Verifiability Policy, however, does not stipulate what kinds of sources contributors must cite to verify the information they post, so these reference and further reading lists do not necessarily provide connections to trustworthy, valid texts appropriate for citing in an academic paper (but, then again, neither do other sources). You still need to evaluate a source to determine if it is suitable for use.

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Figure 1. References section from Wikipedia's Web 2.0 article

5

5. This image, like all the images in this chapter, comes from the English

Further reading

- *A History of Writing: From Hieroglyph to Multimedia* , edited by Anne-Marie Christin, Flammarion (in French) , hardcover: 408 pages , 2002), ISBN 2080108875
- Writing Instruction: Current Practices in the Classroom. ERIC Digest.
- Writing Development. ERIC Digest.
- Writing Instruction: Changing Views over the Years. ERIC Digest.
- Das "Anrennen gegen die Grenzen der Sprache" Diskussion mit Roland Barthes, André Breton, Gilles Deleuze & Raymond Federman by Ralph Lichtensteiger http://www.lichtensteiger.de/methoden.html
- Origins of writing on AncientScripts.com
- History of Writing

Figure 2. Further reading section from Wikipedia's Writing article

Utilizing Wikipedia as a gateway to other sources should not replace going to the library or using your library's online databases. In fact, reviewing the Wikipedia article on your topic can help you better discover sources in your school's library. You might read Wikipedia articles to help you generate search terms to use for finding sources in your school library's catalog and online databases. Ashley Gill (who, like all students quoted in this essay, consented to the use of her real name) explains how she used Wikipedia in this way for an awardwinning research project for her school's first year composition class:

> For this project, I began on Wikipedia, knowing that results were not accurate, but also knowing I could find useful search terms there. I was only slightly familiar with the psychology angle I was using for my paper, and so Wikipedia gave me a rough sketch of the general background. From

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> here, I used the information I gained from Wikipedia to search for books form [*sic*] the . . . Library. ("Research" 2–3)

Gill acknowledges Wikipedia's problem with accuracy but outlines ways in which Wikipedia was still really useful in helping her get some general background information to determine search terms to use to find sources through the library. You might find Wikipedia similarly useful.

Using Wikipedia as a Process Guide

Not only is Wikipedia potentially useful for generating ideas, finding sources, and determining search terms, but it is also potentially useful for remembering and understanding some of the tasks that are frequently part of good research-based writing: reviewing, conversing, revising, and sharing. To be clear, I am not suggesting that all types of research-based writing ask you to do these tasks in exactly the same way or that your writing should emulate a Wikipedia article. However, some of what happens in making successful contributions to Wikipedia parallels some of what happens in producing effective research-based writing. Looking at Wikipedia can help to demystify these practices. These practices happen recursively—that is, they repeat—so the order in which I present them here is not necessarily the best or correct one. While you do not need to move through these practices in a specific order, you will want to engage in these activities for many research-based writing assignments.

The Wikipedia Interface

Before proceeding, let me offer an overview of the Wikipedia interface so that the following discussion, which points to specific aspects of the interface, makes sense. A Wikipedia article's interface has four tabs, as shown in figure 3. These tabs are labeled "article," "discussion," "edit this page," and "history." The "article" tab contains the content of the article. This content is what displays automatically when you open an article in Wikipedia. The "discussion" tab provides access to the conversation surrounding the article, how it is being written, and the topic being written about. On this page users can, among other things, suggest changes to an article, justify changes they made to an article, and ask why other users made changes to an article. You can participate in this conversation. The "edit this page" tab provides a space for users to add, delete, or revise content of an article. This page is where people write the content that is displayed on the "article" page. You can make these changes. Finally, the "history" tab lists all the versions of the article, when they were written, who updated them, and what changes each user made (each author can provide a summary of his or her changes). On the "history" tab users can also compare and contrast selected article versions.

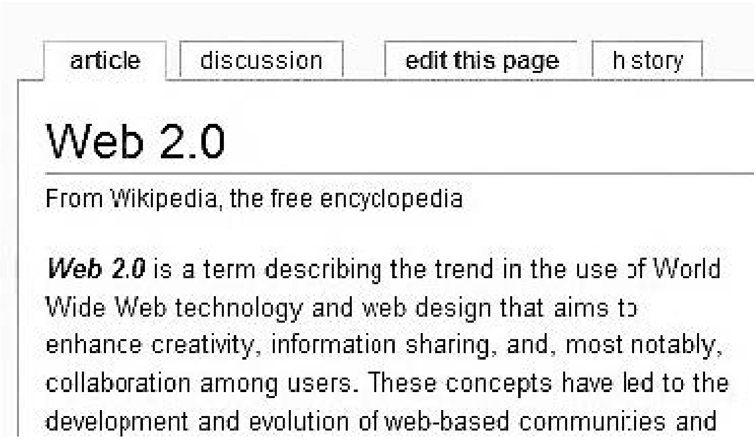

Figure 3. A Wikipedia article interface's four tabs as shown for the Web 2.0
article

Each of the sections below is devoted to a practice common to both successful Wikipedia contributions and research-based writing. In each, I explain how Wikipedia authors engage in that practice, outline how you can learn from what Wikipedians do to engage in that practice for your research-based writing, and finally provide a specific way you can use Wikipedia for help with that practice.

Reviewing

Examining the role of reviewing in contributing to a Wikipedia article can help you understand the role of reviewing in research-based writing. To make a successful contribution to Wikipedia, authors must review what other contributors have already written about the topic. They don't want to include information that the community of people interested in and knowledgeable about the topic has determined to be inappropriate, off topic, or unimportant, or to simply repeat information already published. Such contributions will be deleted—usually quickly—because they do not offer anything new to people's understanding of the topic.

To do this review, successful Wikipedia contributors read texts in and outside of Wikipedia. They look at previous versions of an article on the history page, including the change summaries provided by authors, and read the discussion surrounding an article on the discussion page. To show that they have reviewed other texts published on the topic of the article they are contributing to, Wikipedians also provide citations for material they post. As I indicate above, Wikipedia requires that material posted to articles be verifiable (Bruns 114, "Wikipedia:Verifiability"), so contributors need to demonstrate that they can verify material they post by citing its source. As shown in figure 4, an absence of citations often results in a warning that someone needs to cite a source to support what is written or the text will be removed.

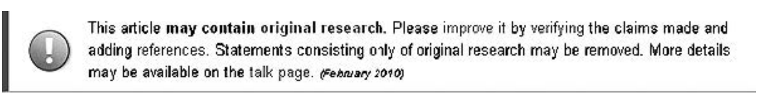

Figure 4. Wikipedia's warning to provide citations to verify claims from the
research article

This process parallels what you can do for research-based writing assignments. Review what other contributors have already published about your topic so you avoid writing something that is inappropriate, off topic, or repetitive. Doing this review in formal course writing is somewhat different than doing it in Wikipedia, though. You need to acknowledge in the texts you write that you have reviewed what others have previously published by doing what is called a literature review. A literature review entails summarizing main points from your sources, identifying their insights and/or limitations, and situating these texts in relation to one another and your writing.

Let's look at an example. Gill provides a literature review in her essay "The Analogical Effects of Neural Hemispheres in 'The Purloined Letter'":

> There are approaches to cognitive, and consequently behavioral, functioning that stem from ideas that each side of the brain thinks differently. Michael Grady asserts that a person who thinks with one side of his brain will differ greatly than a person who thinks with the opposite side (20–21). According to Thomas Regelski, the left side is said to think in the following ways: "linear, sequential, logical, analytical, verbal, fragmenting, differentiating, convergence (seeks closure) . . . conventional symbols, facts (objective, impersonal, confirmable), precision, explicit, Scientific Empiricism/Logical Positivism/certitude/ surety" (30). Conversely, Regelski establishes that the right side is responsible for thinking in the subsequent ways, which seemingly oppose the first set of thinking methods: "circular, simultaneous, paradoxical, combinative, holistic, divergence (content with open-endedness) . . . expressive, vague, implicit . . . Immanence/Introspectionism/ Intuitionism/Intuitive Cognition/indwelling/insight/ intuition" (30). Sally Springer and Georg Deutsch assert in their book *Left Brain, Right Brain* that the human brain is divided in this model, and an easier way to interpret this model is "the left hemisphere is something like a digital computer, the right like an analog computer" (185), and that depending on which hemisphere the individual uses most primarily, the individual will think and therefore act in

> accord with said attributed qualities (186). Poe incorporates many of these characteristics into his characters['] methods during the investigation. The Prefect exemplifies the left side thinking with his systematic and complex approach to finding the purloined letter, while the Minister and Dupin utilize both right and left side attributes, thinking about the cognitions of the other and acting accordingly. (12–13)

Here Gill shows that she has reviewed the work of Grady, Regelski, and Springer and Deutsch by over-viewing their claims about brain function and then connecting those claims to her argument about "The Purloined Letter." Like a successful Wikipedia contributor, she also offers citations, though the form of these citations is different than in Wikipedia. Wikipedia generally uses hyperlinked endnotes, while the most popular academic citation styles from the American Psychological Association (APA) and Modern Language Association (MLA), which Gill uses here, require in-text parenthetical citations and reference and works cited lists, respectively. Despite these differences, the larger idea is the same: in your research-based writing you need to show you have reviewed other relevant texts to demonstrate conversance with appropriate source material and to allow readers to verify your conclusions.

I end this section suggesting a way you can use Wikipedia to help you with this reviewing process. My intention here is to not to prepare you to contribute to a Wikipedia article itself, but rather to use Wikipedia to prepare you to do the reviewing that is part of successful research-based writing. When you are beginning a research-based writing assignment, read the discussion page for the Wikipedia article on the topic you are writing about and identify the debates, questions, and absences that you find. In other words, list what contributors (1) argue about (i.e., what ideas are contentious), (2) have questions about, and (3) think is missing from and should be included in coverage of that topic. Then identify these debates, questions, and absences for the published literature (i.e., books, articles) on your topic. Review what other authors have written about them. Looking at the discussion page first allows you to enact on a smaller scale what you need to do with a wider range of sources for a literature review in a research-based writing project.

Let's consider an example. If you read the discussion page for the Wikipedia article *History of the board game Monopoly*, a section of which is shown in figure 5, you will find that contributors argue about when the game originated and the role Elizabeth Magie played in its creation; they ask questions about the rules for players selling property to one another; and they think information on the volume of game sales, McDonald's Monopoly games/promotions, and the World Monopoly Championships is missing and should be addressed more fully. Were you to write about the history of the board game Monopoly, you now have several avenues (no pun intended!) to read about and know what you might need to review in making an argument on the topic.

The First Paragraph [edit]

Why does the first paragraph not say what country it is talking about? It could be talking about Indonesia fo· all i know. Shouldn't this have been read before putting it on the front page? *sigh* Cokehabit 01:43, 13 December 2006 (UTC)

> It's a board game, originally developed in the USA, which IS mentioned in the first paragraph. The introcuction is no more specific than that because of the game's international history. Adding geography to a non-geographic subject would seem to make no sense. -- JohnDBuell 01:54, 13 Decemter 2006 (UTC)
>
> > It is a terrible start to an article: *The history of the board game Monopoly can be traced back to the early 1900s.* Where? How? References?
> >
> > > Yes we do give references. But you have to read them yourself to get the information you're asking for... -- Derek Ross | Talk 07:49, 13 December 2006 (UTC)

Based on original designs by Elizabeth Magie - If it can be traced back to Elizabeth Magie how come there were *several designs* over 30 years? Why is her name in there if the origin, date and original designer isn't known? When were her desigrs made? Which of the several designs were hers?

> That's because Monopoly was like a wikipedia article. Magie made the first few versions, then other people tweaked it over 30 years. So the name and the design both changed as time went by. It's still basically the same game though. Very much like a Wikipedia article really. -- Derek Ross | Talk 07 49, 13 December 2006 (UTC)

Figure 5. Section of the discussion page from Wikipedia's *History of the board game Monopoly* article

Conversing

A second practice successful Wikipedia contributors engage in that reflects a successful practice of research-based writing is conversing. Productive Wikipedia authors situate their contributions to an article in relation to those of past authors, recognizing that making a contribution to an article is like stepping into an ongoing conversation. Wikipedia authors engage in this practice by posting to the discussion page—for example, by asking questions of and responding to other contributors and by arguing for why they made certain changes—and by providing change summaries for their contributions when they edit an article, particularly change summaries that identify briefly why they made a certain change—for example, "corrected factual errors in introduction," "deleted irrelevant information to maintain article focus."

As with reviewing, conversing is another practice frequently characteristic of successful research-based writing. You should respond to the sources you use rather than just report on or parrot them. While Wikipedia contributors can literally insert themselves into a conversation on a Wikipedia article discussion page, you can engage in conversation with sources in research-based writing by quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing them; by indicating agreements, disagreements, and connections among them and you; and by showing their insights, limitations, and applications.

Consider the following example. In a paragraph from "Literacy," an award-winning first year composition essay on the need to "broaden the range of serious reading material for youth to include comic books and the [I]nternet" (16), Lindsey Chesmar acknowledges what two other sources, Bob Hoover (italicized below) and Janell D. Wilson and Linda H. Casey (bolded below), have written about youth reading behaviors and inserts what she wishes to say in response to them (unformatted text below):

> *The NEA report, "To Read or Not to Read," [sic] shows "the startling declines, in how much and how well Americans read" (Hoover 1).* Although many people could have already guessed, this NEA report officially states what has been on the decline since the early 1990s. However, it seems as though the NEA left out some important data when conducting their study. **According to Wilson and Casey, "comic books have been at the top of the student preference list for sometime, yet it seems that they may not count as 'serious' reading material" (47). Children and young adults have been reading comics and comic books since their beginning. Some educators also use comics in class as a way to interest students who would be otherwise unwilling to read (Wilson and Casey 47).** However, literary studies rarely include comic books in their questions and surveys of youth. If a young adult spends

> 3 hours a week reading comic books, the study will not include that in their overall findings. It is as if that time the young adult spends reading means nothing. *The NEA itself did not include the "double-digit growth in recent years" in sales of books aimed at teens (Hoover 1)*. This statistic leads me to believe that teens are actually reading more than what the recent studies suggest. Leaving out some young adults' reading time and the growing popularity of young adult books could lead to misrepresentations in the results of the overall literacy studies. This also may lead the young adult to believe that what they are reading is not worthy enough, or "serious" enough, to count towards anything. They may feel discouraged and give up reading all together after finding out the things they like to read are not valid in the literary and educational worlds. (17, italics and boldface added)

In this paragraph, Chesmar makes clear that she knows important components of the ongoing conversation about literacy and reading: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) released a study that reports reading (amount and proficiency) has declined in the United States and, though popular among young adults, comic books did not count as reading material for the study. She puts sources discussing these ideas into conversation; note the back and forth between the bold, italics, and unformatted text. She then responds to these sources, writing, "This statistic leads me to believe that teens are actually reading more than what the recent studies suggest" (17). Chesmar thereby establishes her role in the conversation: she thinks the NEA report provides misleading results because it ignores certain types of reading material, which, for her, can have some troubling consequences.

Again, I end this section offering a suggestion for how you can use Wikipedia to help you with the research-based writing process—in this case, by putting your sources into conversation with one another and with you. One way to engage in a conversation like Chesmar does is to construct a dialogue between your sources like the dialogue on a Wikipedia article discussion page. Identify topics your sources address and create headings for them (e.g., concerns, benefits, history). Then quote and paraphrase relevant material from your sources and group it under the appropriate heading. Finally, situate these quotes and paraphrases in relation to one another and add yourself to the discussion. Literally construct a dialogue between them and you. The idea is to see yourself as a participant with a voice in the conversation.

Revising

Another practice that is part of successful Wikipedia and researchbased writing is revising. Effective Wikipedia contributors revise articles frequently. They take advantage of the wiki capability to edit the articles they read. To be successful, they do not give up when other people delete or change their contributions but instead revise in response to the feedback they receive (be that from posts to the discussion page, change summaries on the history page, or administrator explanations for why something was removed). The history page for nearly any Wikipedia article provides evidence of how frequently Wikipedians revise. Figure 6, for instance, shows that authors made eleven revisions to the *Michael Jackson* article in one hour on 28 June 2009. As this page illustrates, making an enduring contribution to a

Wikipedia article is an ongoing process of negotiation with the reading audience. Moreover, those contributors who revise the most and have their article contributions last for a long time can gain in status


(cur) = difference from current version, (prev) = difference from preceding version,
m = minor edit, → = section edit, ← = automatic edit summary

Compare selected revisions

- (cur) (prev) 17:17, 28 June 2009 Sceptre (talk | contribs) (128,130 bytes) *(rv; I think we should wait another two days before removing it (or as long as the tag is also on Farrah Fawcett)*
- (cur) (prev) 17:13, 28 June 2009 Pecoc (talk | contribs) (128,113 bytes) *(the current event tag at Death of Michael Jackson takes care of this, short WP:SS on this page does not merit distracting tag over article)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:59, 28 June 2009 Information yes (talk | contribs) (128,130 bytes) *(RDT stays for 7 days)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:57, 28 June 2009 Pecoc (talk | contribs) (128,115 bytes) *(tag of limited value to readers, he didn't just die a couple mintues ago, it's an investigation now, also per rationale expressed in User:Shanes/Why_tags_are_evil)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:49, 28 June 2009 Geoffwah (talk | contribs) **m** (128,164 bytes)
- (cur) (prev) 16:41, 28 June 2009 SandyGeorgia (talk | contribs) (128,155 bytes) *(→Vocal style: I can't find that in the source)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:34, 28 June 2009 SandyGeorgia (talk | contribs) (128,132 bytes) *(→1986–90: Tabloids, appearance, Bad, autobiography and films: redundant also)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:33, 28 June 2009 SandyGeorgia (talk | contribs) (128,138 bytes) *(faulty punctuation)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:32, 28 June 2009 GraYoshi2x (talk | contribs) **m** (128,133 bytes)
- (cur) (prev) 16:31, 28 June 2009 SandyGeorgia (talk | contribs) (128,133 bytes) *(remove WP:OVERLINKing)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:31, 28 June 2009 GraYoshi2x (talk | contribs) **m** (128,173 bytes) *(fix)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:30, 28 June 2009 GraYoshi2x (talk | contribs) (128,173 bytes) *(if you want to honor him in his death then do it somewhere else, enough with these glorified images that only disrupt the article and context)*
- (cur) (prev) 16:06, 28 June 2009 Heslopian (talk | contribs) (128,186 bytes)
- (cur) (prev) 15:40, 28 June 2009 Jonny5alive (talk | contribs) **m** (128,110 bytes) *(Sp.)*

Figure 6. Section of the history page from Wikipedia's *Michael Jackson* article.

among the Wikipedia community and be promoted to administrators. It is, in other words, through revising that Wikipedia contributors earn respect.

To succeed at research-based writing, you, like a successful Wikipedian, should also revise your texts multiple times in response to feedback you receive. You might receive such feedback from teachers, peers, writing center consultants, roommates, and friends who offer advice and suggestions rather than from strangers who change the text itself, as is the case for Wikipedia contributors. But the larger idea remains: creating an effective text involves multiple iterations of recursive revision. You need to write a draft, get some feedback, respond to that feedback in your next draft, and repeat the process. Good writing entails thinking through your ideas on the page or screen. Rarely do people record perfectly what they think the first time they write it down. Indeed, you often don't know what you think until you write it down. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find at the end of your first draft the thesis to develop in your second. That's okay! Knowledge production through writing is an ongoing process.

One way to use Wikipedia to help with revising a course assignment is to post a change to a Wikipedia article based on a draft you are writing, see how others respond and analyze those responses. In other words, give your idea a test drive with a public audience. If you aren't comfortable posting directly to an article or are afraid your contribution might get taken down, suggest a change on the discussion page and likewise chronicle the responses. Then revise your draft based on the feedback and responses you receive. The point of this activity isn't just to revise the Wikipedia article itself (though you might chose to do that later), but to use responses and what you learn by posting to Wikipedia to help you revise your research-based writing for class.

Sharing

A final practice successful Wikipedians engage in that reflects a successful practice of research-based writing is sharing. To get feedback, Wikipedia contributors share their writing; they post it for public viewing by editing an article and/or contributing to the discussion page for that article. Otherwise, they do not get feedback, their writing cannot have an impact on others' understanding of a topic, and they cannot gain in status among the Wikipedia community. To more fully participate in this sharing, they might even register and create a profile so other contributors and readers know who they are and can contact them. Professor Mark A. Wilson, for example, identifies contact with other people as a beneficial outcome of sharing his writing and photographs on *the Great Inagua Island* Wikipedia article. He was even invited to speak at the school of someone who saw what he shared.

You also need to share your writing to be successful. While this may seem obvious on some level, sharing involves more than turning in a final draft to a teacher. You have to be willing and prepared to share your writing earlier in your writing process. You can share by taking your writing to the writing center,[6] giving it to a classmate for a peer workshop, or reviewing it in a conference with an instructor. This sharing is clearly less public than posting to a widely accessible website like Wikipedia, but it still entails making written work available to a reading audience and is a critical part of the learning process. Key is that in order to get the most benefit from sharing—that is, to get feedback to which you can respond—you need to be prepared to share your writing prior to its due date. In other words, you cannot procrastinate.

Using Wikipedia as I suggest above in the revising section is also a good way to share your writing. After all, a goal of sharing is to get feedback to revise. You can, however, use wiki technology in another way to share

6. See Ben Rafoth's "Why Visit Your Campus Writing Center?" chapter on *Writing Spaces*.

your writing. You can record in a course wiki (or another wiki you create) your writing of a text, provide change summaries for all of the different versions along the way, and ask others to review your progress. Using a wiki in this way allows you to reflect on what you are doing and provides an accessible venue for you to share your work—one where your peers and your teacher can respond.

Conclusion

Understanding how to use (and not to use) Wikipedia as a source can help you avoid relying on Wikipedia in unproductive ways and can help you see sources as more than static products to plunk into your writing. In other words, looking at Wikipedia as a starting place (for ideas, sources, search terms, etc.) shows the importance of engaging with rather than ventriloquizing sources—of viewing sources as means to spur and develop your thinking rather than as means to get someone else to do your thinking for you.

Doing research-based writing can also be less daunting—and more fulfilling and fun—when you understand the practices involved and realize that these activities are an important part of knowledge creation. No one assigned Wikipedia contributors to proceed as they do. Since their goal, however, is to add to our understanding of a topic— the very same goal you have for the research-based writing you do in first year composition—they engage in certain activities: reviewing, conversing, revising, and sharing. Not all Wikipedians perform these practices in the same order in the same way, but successful Wikipedians do them. And the most dedicated contributors stay involved even after their text is shared: they read, respond, and revise, over and over again. The process doesn't stop when their writing is made public. That's just the beginning. If you approach your research-based writing in a similar fashion, it'll likely be the beginning of a journey of knowledge creation for you, too.

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Wikipedia, **research**, **source**, process

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Attributions

17.

COMING UP WITH RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Rashida Mustafa and Emilie Zickel

You have chosen a topic. You have taken that topic and developed it into a **research question** or a **hypothesis**. Now it is time to begin your research.

You may want to begin by asking yourself questions relating to your chosen topic so that you can begin sifting through and perusing sources that you will use to further your understanding of the topic. When you begin the research phase of your essay, you will come across an array of sources that look helpful in the beginning, but once you have a clearer idea of what you want to research, you might see that the research you were once considering to use in your essay is now irrelevant. To make your research efficient, start your project with a well-defined research strategy.

A **research strategy** involves deciding what you need to know in order to answer your research question. The following questions will aid you in deciding what you need to know:

- What data do you need?
- What can different kinds of sources—popular or academic, primary/secondary/tertiary—offer you?
- Whose perspectives could help you to answer your research question?
- What kinds of professionals/scholars will be able to give you the information you seek?
- What kinds of keywords should you be using to get the information that you want?

Where should I look?

As you seek sources that can help you answer your research question, think about the types of "voices" you need to hear from. The following list will help you to consider different perspectives that may be useful:

- scientists/researchers who have conducted their own research studies on your topic
- scholars/thinkers/writers who have also looked at your topic and offered their own analyses of it

- journalists who are reporting on what they have observed
- journalists/newspaper or magazine authors who are providing their educated opinions on your topic
- critics, commentators or others who offer opinions on your topic
- tertiary sources/fact books that offer statistics or data (usually without analysis)
- personal stories of individuals who have lived through an event
- bloggers/tweeters/other social media posters

Any of these perspectives (and more) could be useful in helping you to answer your research question.

Wikipedia DOs and DONTs

Wikipedia, the place that we have all been told to avoid, **can be a great place to get ideas for a research strategy**. Wikipedia can help you to identify key terms, people, events, arguments or other elements that are essential to understanding your topic. The information that you find on Wikipedia can also offer ideas for keywords that you can use to search in academic databases. Spending a bit of time in Wikipedia can help you to answer essential beginning questions, such as:

- Do you fully understand the history of your topic?

- Do you understand the current situation/most recent information on your topic?
- Do you know about key events that have shaped the controversy surrounding your topic?

Remember that **Wikipedia is a resource, NOT a source**. Should you cite Wikipedia? Not usually. Should you be using a Wikipedia page as a source? Not usually. But Wikipedia can give you some wonderful access to the context surrounding your topic and help you to get started. The following are some questions that may help you to use Wikipedia appropriately, if you use it at all:

- What key words did you find through a Wikipedia page that you can use in further research?
- What aspects of controversy surrounding your topic (people, events, dates, or other specifics—) can you use in further research?
- What sources (from the Wikipedia page's List of References) will you pursue and perhaps locate and read?

The video below offers more tips on how you can integrate Wikipedia into your research strategy.

One or more interactive elements has been *excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=133#oembed-1*

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "9.2 Coming Up With Research Strategies" by Rashida Mustafa and Emilie Zickel in A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License,

PART III

WORKING WITH SOURCES

What makes a *good* source—and how do you use it?

This section explores what it means to work thoughtfully, ethically, and rhetorically with research materials. These chapters cover everything from finding reliable sources to integrating them into your writing with clarity and purpose. Along the way, you’ll learn how to ask better questions, organize your research, and understand the role of sources in building strong, credible arguments. Whether you’re conducting original research or joining an existing scholarly conversation, these chapters will help you move from information gathering to intentional engagement.

We begin with href=”https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/chapter/making-research-ethical-jennifer-clary-lemon-derek-mueller-and-kate-pantelides/” rel=”noopener”>Making Research Ethical by Jennifer

Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate L. Pantelides. In this chapter, an excerpt from their textbook *Try This: Research Methods for Writers,* the authors discuss what makes a source reliable, examines the subjectivities researchers bring to their projects, and offers strategies for effectively evaluating authors and texts. They also draw attention to ethical citation practices and provide guidance on research involving human participants. In Using Sources Ethically, Yvonne Bruce further emphasizes the importance of integrity in academic work. Bruce outlines best practices for avoiding plagiarism, accurately representing source material, and understanding the ethical implications of source integration. By adhering to these principles, writers can maintain credibility and uphold the standards of scholarly communication.

The next few chapters focus on Information Literacy, and specifically, how to identify types of sources and select the most relevant ones for a given project. In Categorizing Types of Sources: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel clarify the distinctions between various source types. Understanding these categories is crucial for selecting appropriate evidence and constructing a solid research foundation. The authors provide clear definitions and examples to guide you in identifying and utilizing different kinds of sources effectively. In the next chapter, Emilie Zickel helps writers identify these sources, offering practical advice on navigating academic databases in Basic Guidelines for Research in Academic Databases. She introduces strategies for developing effective search queries, refining search results, and accessing scholarly articles. By mastering these techniques, you can efficiently locate high-quality sources pertinent to your research topics. Using Effective Keywords in Your Research by Robin Jeffrey builds upon database research skills by focusing on the selection of impactful keywords. This chapter provides insights into how to choose and combine keywords to yield the most relevant search results, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of your research process.

The next couple chapters address source credibility, ensuring that writers identify types of evidence that will effectively support their research projects. In Source Credibility: How to Select the Best Sources, Cayla Buttram, David MacMillan III, and Leigh Thompson Stanfield offer guidance on evaluating and choosing sources that best support your arguments. This chapter emphasizes the importance of relevance, credibility, and diversity in source selection, ensuring that your research is comprehensive and well-rounded. Next, in Assessing Source Credibility for Crafting a Well-Informed Argument by Kate Warrington, Natasha Kovalyova, and Cindy King delves deeper into evaluating the trustworthiness of sources. This chapter provides criteria and methods for critically assessing the reliability and bias of information, enabling you to build arguments based on credible and authoritative evidence.

The last set of chapters in this section addresses how to organize sources and integrate them effectively within text. First, Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides return with Worknets and Invention, introducing innovative strategies for organizing research conversations and connecting ideas during the research process. This chapter helps you visualize the relationships between concepts and sources, understand scholarly dialogue, and ultimately develop more nuanced arguments. The process of creating a Worknets essay "explodes" a source, highlighting the context, position, and resources behind scholarly sources. This project functions well as a potential alternative to a traditional Annotated Bibliography. Keeping Track of Your Sources and Writing an Annotated Bibliography by Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel includes information on annotated bibliography components and tips for keeping track of the sources you find through research. In Conducting Your Own Primary Research, Melanie Gagich guides you through the process of designing and implementing original research. This chapter covers primary research methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations, providing a foundation for gathering and analyzing your own data to complement secondary sources. Kyle Stedman describes poor decisions that academic writers can make when incorporating outside sources into their texts in Annoying Ways People Use Sources. By highlighting common mistakes, Stedman offers practical advice on how to integrate sources smoothly and effectively, enhancing the readability and professionalism of your writing. Finally, in Synthesis and Literature Reviews, Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel discuss what a literature review is and provides tips for organizing one. This chapter emphasizes the importance of synthesizing information from multiple sources to identify trends, gaps, and relationships in existing research, laying the groundwork for your own contributions to the field.

18.

MAKING RESEARCH ETHICAL

Jennifer Clary-Lemon; Derek Mueller; and Kate L. Pantelides

Abstract

This essay "Making Research Ethical," is an excerpt from *Try This: Research Methods for Writers,* by Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides. The authors describe ethical research practices for both primary and secondary research. They consider what makes a source reliable, subjectivities authors bring to their research projects, and strategies to effectively evaluate authors and texts. The chapter also draws attention to ethical citation

practices and closes with ways to approach research with people.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

"[E]very methods-based decision is also an ethical decision."
-Heidi McKee

He wrote a juicy memoir claiming the discovery of the DNA double helix model as his own, casting aspersions on his long-time collaborators.

After she got the results back from her DNA testing kit, she learned of a family predisposition for a genetic disorder that she had passed down to her children unknowingly.

The ancestry software he purchased showed a direct family connection to infamous slave-owners.

They named the genetically cloned sheep Dolly after Dolly Parton, for pretty tawdry reasons.

Although she ran an organic farm, she often found that genetically modified seeds made their way into her fields, distributed by winds from nearby farms.

The brief anecdotes that begin this chapter constitute just some of the ethical quandaries resulting from what some have termed "The Birth of Molecular Biology," the development of the DNA double helix model. This important scientific finding was peopled with unethical behavior and scandal, and the many resulting questions that have arisen from the discovery continue to churn both inside of and external to the scientific community: Should DNA be modified? For food? For people? For sheep? What about ancestry software and genetic testing? Who should have access to genetic data, and what should they be allowed to do with it? Such ethical considerations are an important component of this research project. Consider the following questions that help address ethical issues when conducting research:

- How is research developed and by whom?
- How are data and participants treated and protected during the research process?
- Who claims credit for the work conducted? Who cites others as collaborators and forebears of their work?
- Is research written about intimately, distantly, in first person, in third person?
- How is data stored? Who has access to data?
- Who benefits or is hurt by research?

All of these questions (and more!) make up the ethical component of research design. Understanding research ethics and wrestling with the often complex questions that the ethical component of research design entails are essential elements of conducting effective, responsible research. **Research ethics** address the evolving conventions, codes of conduct, and standards research communities adopt to strive for ethical development and circulation of research and to protect audiences, authors, and their research contributions.

Ethical Approaches to Research

The scientific method, which is often the foundation for much of our understanding about the research process, asks us to strive for objectivity. This is a **positivist** approach to research that assumes that there is one clear answer to a research question. However, in contemporary contexts, and certainly in the example of the development of the double helix DNA model, most scholars have agreed that research is rarely so clear cut. There are usually multiple answers to research questions—some better, some more conventional, some more accepted by **communities of practice** than others. This lack of certainty can sometimes worry apprentice researchers; they might be concerned that any answer is right or that research is more about saying the right thing rather than striving for answers. This is not the case! It just means that in this **constructivist** world of research—an understanding of research that considers the interactions between researchers, research subjects, and their environments—our goal is not objectivity but fairness and an ethical approach to research.

Further, some researchers suggest that the goal of research is **strong objectivity**, an orientation toward research that acknowledges the role of people in developing research and encourages researchers to acknowledge their own **subjectivities**, or the potential biases and experiences that might impact their approach to research design and data analysis.*

* Accepting that research is complex and that there are no easy, clear answers makes the research process more honest, more exciting, more effective, and, ironically, less biased.

Ethos is Collective and Individual

We often reduce **ethos** to considering whether a particular author is credible, but ethos is largely collective. Pause for a moment and consider where and why you're reading this text. Most likely you've selected a place to sit and read because of a combination of reasons related to convenience, access, necessity, and reputation. Let's focus on the latter in particular. If you're reading at work, a coffee shop, or at home, you may have chosen this place because you've talked with others about the right place to study, or you might have taken friends and family's advice because you trust them. You're reading this book because you're in a class at an institution that values your experiences with writing, and your instructor has selected a text based on many factors, including its reputable publisher and authors who actively conduct research on the subject area. So even though you may be sitting alone with a book, there are many people who stand behind you, impacting the decisions you make and your broader credibility as a student and learner. And even though the names of only three authors appear on this book, there are hundreds of friends, family members, scholars, publishers, and editors who have contributed to the content and collective ethos of this book.

It goes deeper: your instructor has an impact on your ethos, just as you have an impact on them. If you do well in the class, it suggests that she is a good instructor. This might impact her status at the university, her qualification for a potential promotion, or her standing in the department. If you mention down the road that you had this particular instructor, someone else may expect that you're a good writer because you have had good instruction, and they may hire you for an internship or job, or maybe they'll ask you to complete a challenging project because your instructor has contributed to your ethos as an effective writer. Your classmates impact your ethos, and you theirs. If your classmates are effective writers in their careers post-graduation, graduates from your university may gain a reputation for being particularly well-qualified for careers in communication. This could impact your prospects when you graduate, and your performance will impact students who graduate after you as well. Your college or university impacts your **ethos.*** And the network continues.

* Although we often boil down questions of ethos to individuals, they are just one access point in a network of ethos that is largely collective and constantly shifting and circulating.

When you decide that a particular author is credible and has a reliable ethos, it's because a network of people have helped establish that—the journal in which they have published, the institutions and organizations to which they belong, their partners and families, etc.

Ethics and Secondary Research

As we noted in the introduction, many of our recommendations in this book oscillate between recommendations for **invention**—developing access points for your research project, or what some refer to, in part, as prewriting or brainstorming—and **delivery**—the ways in which your research project is communicated, or delivered, to an audience. An ethical approach to research should impact both invention and delivery in relation to your project. A starting place for many research projects includes the invention associated with identifying secondary research that informs your project. Chapter 3: Worknets provides a specific framework for reading sources deeply. In particular, we describe four methods, or phases, for reading secondary research. The first phase is the **semantic** phase, which asks you to be attentive to keywords in the text you've selected. The second phase is the **bibliographic** phase, which asks you to trace intersections between sources. The third phase is the **affinity** phase, which invites you to consider how writers are connected to each other. And finally, the fourth phase, the **choric** phase, asks you to consider the broader rhetorical context in which an article is written. Before you delve into this framework in detail, consider how secondary research that forms a **critical conversation** about an issue is constructed. In this section we'll also work to identify how to establish ethos, evaluate texts and authors, and learn citation systems, processes associated with an ethical approach to secondary research.

Try This: Consider What Activities and People Impact Your Ethos (30 minutes)

You have had a long history as a reader and writer. The people, places, and activities with which you have come into contact during this history impact your ethos. Compose a drawing that illustrates the network of influences that collectively constitute your ethos. You may hand-sketch or use clip-art, stick figures, and/or text to develop your composition. The goal is to make tangible the collective nature of your own ethos so that you can consider how this principle extends to other researchers. Consider the following invention questions to help develop your composition:

- What are your earliest reading and writing experiences? Who and what contributed?
- What was the first primary research project you conducted (think of "research" broadly—any time you test a theory or answer a question for yourself,

you're doing a form of primary research)? Who influenced the research?

- Who has taught you about conducting research? What are the primary lessons you've learned?
- What formal school and learning experiences impact your approach to research?
- What experiences external to school impact your approach to research?

Establishing Ethos

One of the primary ways that researchers demonstrate their understanding of research convention and establish **ethos** is by carefully citing the authors they've read who have contributed to the critical conversation they'd like to join. **Ethos** is an author's credibility, or the trust an author establishes with an audience, and it can be a measure of how much **uptake,*** or interest, influence, and sharing, their work gets once they've completed a research project. When researching your area of interest, knowing what a particular community has said about it and finding the niche or gap in the research about it provides an opportunity for you to make a contribution to this conversation. Thoroughly reading secondary sources and genuinely representing others' ideas is part of an ethical approach to secondary research that helps establish your ethos and that may pave the way for you to add your voice in ways that are important to a given community. Chapter 3 helps demonstrate an ethical level of engagement with which researchers should consider secondary sources.

> * Although uptake sounds nebulous, you can see it in action every time someone on social media shares a particular message, meme, or visual.

For instance, one of our former students, Gabriel Green, collaborated on a research project that considered the impact of campus crime and safety alerts. The project started with a question that we shared—how do the safety alerts impact the campus community? He engaged in primary research, gathering university records of crime alerts since the beginning of their circulation. He also considered secondary research, the critical conversation surrounding on-campus safety. By effectively citing experts in the field to demonstrate his knowledge of the current, existing discussion, he was able to establish ethos and craft an engaging exigency, or timely reason, to situate the research.

Demonstrating understanding of critical conversations and research conventions is key to establishing ethos, but having personal experience related to an issue can also make a researcher particularly well-suited for a particular project. Student researcher Zepher Barber developed a project about the best ways for students to prepare for first-year writing and to acclimate to the university. Because she was a successful, experienced, first-year student herself, Ms. Barber was an especially effective researcher to develop such a project. By claiming her status as a first-year student, and thus her privileged proximity to the area of research that she was writing about, she helped establish her ethos. Ethos is thus emplaced: it is related to the "where'" of a writing situation, the "who" conducting the research, and the "when" that animates the experience.

Try This: Making an Argument for Your Research by Identifying an Opening (1 hour)

Effective research proposals (Chapter 1) spotlight for readers how the researcher is connected to the work of others. Such gestures can deepen the researcher's ethos because they acknowledge that this new work bears relation to what has preceded it. Based on his work examining how scholars introduce research projects by demonstrating a gap in the critical conversation, John Swales developed a model to show apprentice researchers to do the same. Swales observed that scholars make the following basic moves:

- **Name the critical conversation.** This might include scholarly discussions of strategies for success in university writing, ethical considerations for the research process, concerns about the financial stability of a particular institution, etc.

- **Identify threads or themes related to the research area.** In this step, writers narrow their focus and cite authors their work draws from and to which they hope to respond.
- **Articulate what has not been said before** and explain why it is important that we consider this particular aspect of the issue.
- **State their argument** and demonstrate its importance in contributing to the identified opening in the research conversation.

Try it out for the secondary research you do!

Evaluating Texts and Authors

When you approach an article, you want to consider the venue and the authors' collective ethos. If you search for **peer-reviewed** secondary research through a library database, research that has been considered and shared by a community of experts, this technology helps you identify credible sources. Database searches often (though not always) filter out sources that have not been verified as credible by peers within a research community. But why is peer review so important? Why are peer-reviewed sources often privileged over other types of sources? It helps to know how the peer review process works.

Consider this textbook. Before this book got to you, it went through a long peer review and editorial process in which multiple people reviewed the work and provided feedback. This process is demonstrated in Figure 2.1. We first developed a book proposal, which went to the publisher. It then went out for peer review to eight experts in the field, writing teachers from all kinds of universities and colleges. They provided feedback, and we developed a draft of the book based on those reviews. Then we sent the complete draft to our editor, received feedback from her, made changes, and then chapters of the book were again sent to expert peer reviewers. The whole process took a few years!

Journal articles are a little different. Once you complete the research and write the article, you send it to a journal. The editor decides whether the article is appropriate to send out for review by asking questions like the following: Are these authors credible? Do they use evidence to support their claims? Are they arguing something totally wacky and empirically wrong? If the editor decides it is appropriate to do so, she sends the chapter to at least two experts in the field, and any of the authors' identifying aspects are removed so that they are anonymous. The reviewers decide whether the article is appropriate for publication and whether the authors should make any changes. This part of the process usually takes at least a year.

Figure 2.1. The development and review process for this book.

So why bother? Why engage in such a long process? The time, multiple perspectives, opportunities for revision and reflection, and multiple layers of review help ensure that the ideas that are shared represent rigorous, effective, and ethical research. Peer review ensures that there are multiple experts who vouch for the ideas shared, and in this way the article shares the collective ethos of the community who has engaged with the work. This is in contrast to a newspaper article, which usually has at least one other person who has read the work, and a blog or independent website, in which the author may be the only one who has read and reviewed the material. This doesn't mean that information from other sources is incorrect; it just means that you have to be even more careful about considering the ethos of the author and article because the peer review process hasn't helped do that for you. You are forced to rely more on the author's individual ethos rather than consider the collective ethos that is communicated through peer review.

Especially if your project requires that you do research outside of peer-reviewed venues (and there are lots of good reasons for this!), you might ask the following questions of the sources with which you engage (and make sure to visit Chapter 3, which provides a framework for working deeply with sources):

Remember, providing an opinion or having subjectivities does not mean that an author lacks credibility.* You just have to consider how honest an author is about those opinions and subjectivities and whether they let their values and beliefs compromise their ability to do ethical research. These considerations function in everyday life, too. If someone invites you to a restaurant they own and tells you that it's the best restaurant in town, you might question their ability to make an informed opinion. They have a vested, economic interest in you visiting their restaurant. However, if a friend eats at that restaurant every week and tells you it's the best restaurant in town, you might take their opinion more seriously. They have a clear opinion, and they're subjective about the restaurant (they love it!), but their ideas aren't compromised by their relationship to the restaurant. If you hear from multiple friends whose opinions you respect that it's the best restaurant around, you'll probably plan to go check it out. All of this is to say, awareness of an author's opinion or subjectivity doesn't mean that an article is not credible. Folks who are honest about their subjectivities should actually be viewed as potentially more credible than others who aren't aware of how their experiences impact their approach to research.

* All people have opinions and subjectivities; it is essentially the definition of being human—subjectivities are inescapable.

Learning Citation Systems

Every choice—to include an author's full name or use their initial instead, to capitalize every word in an article title (or not!), to italicize or abbreviate, to use a comma, period, or semicolon, or even to emphasize the placement of the year of publication— is meaningful and has reasons behind it. Once you've selected effective articles and spent time with them, how do you cite them in your research project? And why should you cite them? Citing sources provides a breadcrumb pathway for your audience so they can follow the research path you've taken, make their own judgments about what you've found, and perhaps disagree with your findings or add to what you've contributed. You demonstrate your ethos as a credible, ethical researcher by correctly citing research and being attentive to the conventions of research practice. Unfortunately, citations are often talked about as simply a vehicle to avoid plagiarism, but we hope that you'll move beyond such a perspective. Citations are important because they're trail markers or signposts on the research path. You put them down so that both you and your audience remember where you've traversed. Because research—when it's good, when it's engaging—is quite a ride. It takes you to unexpected places, and if you don't leave clear trail markers, it is very possible to get lost. Further, research is a conversation between you and the other researchers you're citing and drawing on in the project you've developed. When you cite, you highlight the different voices in the project. This multiple voicing is indicative of how we communicate. We always bring other people's ideas into our communication, both written and spoken. This characteristic of communication is known as **intertextuality**, a concept that describes how other people's language is seamlessly embedded in our own. Citation celebrates this natural aspect of communication and makes it visible.

There are many different citation systems. Communities in the humanities often use Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Social science research communities often use American Psychological Association (APA) style. Many STEM fields have citation styles that are specific to individual journals or subdisciplines. Other disciplines use a version of Chicago Style. It can be easy to feel that citations are arbitrary, but when you look at them closely and alongside each other, the differences and conventions become more meaningful. In fact, the conventions function as clues to what a particular discipline values and what kind of sources they use most.* This is part of why citation styles are updated so frequently; disciplinary values grow and change, particularly as the kinds of evidence they cite changes.

* Every choice—to include an author's full name or use their initial instead, to capitalize every word in an article title (or not!), to italicize or abbreviate, to use a comma, period, or semicolon, or even to emphasize the placement of the year of publication— is meaningful and has reasons behind it.

Consider the style variations in Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 of a single citation that represents an article we read to inform the beginning of this chapter:

Figure 2.2. Annotated MLA style citation.

MLA style: Halloran, S. Michael. "The Birth of Molecular Biology: An Essay in the Rhetorical Criticism of Scientific Discourse." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, Sep. 1984, pp. 70-83. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/465734.

Figure 2.3. Annotated APA style citation.

APA style: Halloran, S. M. (1984). The birth of molecular biology: An essay in the rhetorical criticism of scientific discourse. *Rhetoric Review*, 3(1), 70–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198409359083

Try This: Comparing Citation Systems (30 minutes)

1. Locate a peer-reviewed source that aligns with your research interests.
2. Cite the source using different citation systems.
3. Next, compare citations, and examine them rhetorically.
    1. What are the differences?
    2. Consider, how does citation demonstrate disciplinary values?
    3. How can order and punctuation be rhetorical and meaningful?

Figure 2.4. Annotated Chicago style citation.

Chicago style: Halloran, S. Michael. 1984. "The Birth of Molecular Biology: An Essay in the Rhetorical Criticism of Scientific Discourse." Rhetoric Review 3, no. 1 (September): 70–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198409359083.

You do not have to memorize a particular citation system, because it will inevitably change as research conventions change. Instead, try to understand the citation system that you use most frequently. Consider the components and think through the relationship of this citation system to the disciplinary values that you see reflected.*

* If you work towards making sense of the citation systems rather than just committing to memory where the various commas go, it will make more sense to you and you will be more flexible in moving between citation styles if necessary. It will also be less confusing when you have to update to a new version of the citation system.

Ethics and Primary Research

In subsequent chapters we will address numerous research methods for working with words (Chapter 4), people (Chapter 5), places and things (Chapter 6), and visuals (Chapter 7). Each set of methods requires different thinking when it comes to ethics, but many of these considerations are related to the impact research has on people, the safety of their environment, and the potential benefits or detriments to their privacy.

Working with Human Subjects

When you conduct primary research with human subjects (which might include texts, images, or places) you need to take into account particular ethical aspects of your research. Imagine if the scientists who discovered the DNA Double Helix had considered how their discovery might impact subsequent generations. What if they had suggested guidelines? Or, what if they hadn't fought over ownership of the model? How might their interactions with each other have changed ethical approaches to the treatment of DNA data? Nowadays, universities have **Institutional Review Boards (IRB)** that approve and make recommendations about research with human subjects. If you do not intend to publish your research, your research is not necessarily replicable, or it won't contribute to *generalized knowledge*—conversations about research to which particular communities and bodies of research orient, then you do not necessarily need to have your research plan approved by an IRB. When in doubt, you can always ask a faculty member or contact your IRB representative to see if your work is exempt. Even if your research need not be approved by IRB, it is useful to consider their recommendations for ethical research with human subjects because these regulations were developed to protect people. Unfortunately, all of these regulations were developed because researchers have conducted incredibly unethical research. Joseph Breault and other scholars have detailed how our current guidelines have come to be. In brief, many of our guidelines are a version of the 1976 Belmont Report, a report developed by a commission, the purpose of which was to ensure **informed consent** and **ethical treatment** of research participants. Informed consent is required when you are conducting research with human subjects. This just means that you ensure that the person you are surveying or interviewing (see Chapter 5 for detailed focus on research methods designed for working with people) fully understands the research in which they're taking part and that they agree to participate. It is important to let participants know what the research is about; if there will be any benefits, danger, or threat to them; and that they can choose not to participate at any time.

Informed consent and recommendations for ethical treatment of human subjects is a response to inhumane research conducted by Nazis on people during World War II. There have been other problematic, unethical studies—too many to mention here—but one particularly heinous, well-known study is the Tuskegee Study in which African American men infected with syphilis went untreated for forty years so that researchers could examine the impact of the disease. Subsequent regulations ensure that research does not hurt participants and that participants are fully aware of what a study in which they take part fully entails.

This notion of informed consent is central to ethical treatment of research participants. Folks need to fully understand what they are agreeing to when you ask them to participate in your research. There are some populations of people—children, prisoners, mentally disabled persons, and pregnant women—who receive additional protections according to IRB protocols, so you might take this into account if your research includes members of one of these groups. Further, face-to-face research with people can differ from research that you conduct in digital spaces. For instance, if you conduct an informal poll through social media for the purposes of a research project, it may not feel like you're doing research, but you are! You will need to get consent from your participants, though it might look different than obtaining consent in person.

Interacting with Audiences

The thing is, even if you don't set out to interview or survey folks, your research still might involve interaction with people, and ultimately, the goal of research is to share your ideas with an audience. If you're taking photographs as part of your research, as you'll spend time with in Chapter 7, you'll have to consider whether or not people will end up in those images. And if so, do they know they're being photographed? If you're doing textual research on a blog or a Facebook community, even though the texts you're considering are public, folks might not think of that space as public. You'll need to think through how you interact with your potential research participants, data, and audience.

Try This: Learn About Your Institution's IRB Office (30 minutes)

Every institution has their own IRB office, complete with their own guidelines and reporting structures. To get a sense of your institution's ethical approach to research, find your IRB office's website, and consider the following:

- Who is on your institution's IRB board? Are they faculty members? Staff members? What disciplines do they represent?
- What is the process on your campus for conducting research with human subjects?
- Are there different expectations for undergraduate student, graduate student, faculty member, and staff member researchers?
- How does your institution define research with human subjects? How does it define ethics?

You might also identify a nearby institution or a school you considered attending. Find its IRB office website and compare it with the one at your school. Where are the overlaps? What is different?

> And what is the significance of the comparisons you have made?

For instance, Kate is currently conducting a project that examines the impact of plagiarism accusations on students and faculty members. All people in her study are asked to consent to participate in the study. However, in talking to research participants about their experiences, she has learned about other students who have plagiarized. What is Kate's responsibility as a researcher in writing about these people who have plagiarized but who have not consented to participate in her study? As a researcher, she needs to consider the expectations for student privacy, the sensitivity of the material, and the potential harms and/or benefits to the university community. Can she anonymize the students in the stories she has heard, or would sharing any part of these narratives cause the students to suffer? Key aspects to consider when making such decisions are the relationship between the researcher and the research population—or **proximity**—and potential **beneficence*** of the research. In this case, Kate is a faculty member, and her research participants are students, so although they all interact in the same sphere, there is a power differential that complicates the relationship. The findings of Kate's research have significantly beneficial potential for the university, but not at the expense of outing students who have not shared their plagiarism stories publicly.

***Beneficence asks whether the research is charitable, equitable, and fair to participants by taking into full account the possible consequences for the researcher and the participants.**

Designing Writing That Does Ethical Work

Hopefully you are already on board with the importance of approaching research ethically, with ethics and fairness as your primary research objective rather than objectivity. If you still have questions, or if you're not sold on these ideas yet, please don't hesitate to talk to your instructor and colleagues (and us!) about your questions, engage in your own research on ethics, and see the end of this chapter for further reading recommendations. But if you are ready to start designing ethical research, some important written products to develop are **research protocols**, or your plan for research; **scripts**, or the particular way you will describe your research to participants, particularly for focus groups in which a group of people participate in the research or there are multiple research facilitators; and **participation** or **consent forms**.

Try This Together: Considering Ethical Research (45 minutes)

In groups, consider the following situations, which include complex ethical components from research projects scholars have developed. Talk through the ethical issues at hand: how might you handle them?

- In 2012, scholar Jody Shipka bought six boxes from a yard sale that included personal photographs, diaries, and scrapbooks from a couple she did not know. These boxes inspired her project, "Inhabiting Dorothy," in which she attempted to travel and record the same paths that the couple had catalogued in their materials. Dr. Shipka invited audience members to also participate in the project, reenacting experiences and images of folks they do not know. What are the ethical components at work here?

- Technical Communication Scholar Fernando Sanchez examined a 2017 court case in response to gerrymandering in two Texas districts. He examined the ways that legislative mapmakers used GIS software to create maps that make political arguments. How might maps and their representations of people represent ethical or unethical research practices? How do images and their representation impact audiences? How might subsequent researchers take up Sanchez's findings?
- Heidi McKee described how in 2008 she read a research project that accidentally included contact information for one of the research participants who was supposed to be anonymous. The authors had included a screen capture of a newspaper article that described the research participant's brush with the law. Although the researchers meant to keep the subject's identity secret, the screen capture was easily enlarged, and the article and identifying information about the person was easily accessed. How does this experience highlight the complexities of maintaining research

participant anonymity? How does digital research and publication impact this complexity?

- Photographer Christine Rogers developed a series of images between 2007-2008 titled “New Family” in which she posed for family photos (complete with the quintessential hand on shoulder pose) with people who were strangers to her. In what ways would Ms. Rogers have to approach participants? What are the ethical considerations of such a project?

Below, we’ll focus in particular on developing a participation form, which is necessary for conducting research with human subjects. In Chapter 5, we outline specific research methods for working with people, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, but before you do that work, you’ll need to make sure that participants understand and want to participate in your research.

Often in working with human subjects, we are asked to “do no harm” and to weigh the potential benefit to society in relation to the potential discomfort to research participants. We hope that this chapter helps demonstrate why it is so important (and complicated) to consider ethical questions in conducting secondary research and designing primary research, but we invite you to go a step further. In the chapters that follow, you'll be introduced to multiple research methods and invited to develop invention activities for potential research projects. Instead of merely considering how to avoid harm, consider how your research might actually do good. How can we use these research methods to not just perform ethical research but to in fact be more ethical?

Focus on Delivery: Composing a Participation Form

The primary purpose of a participation or consent form is to ensure that research participants understand what is being asked of them if they choose to participate in your research so that they can fully and knowledgeably consent (or choose not to consent). However, designing such a form is also important invention work. Thinking through and writing down what participation in your study entails helps you think through what you're asking participants to do, and it might help you revise and reconceive your project in productive ways.

If you plan to publish your research (or you even just think you might want to), if your research is replicable, if your research will contribute to generalizable knowledge, or if you would like to work with protected populations, you will need IRB approval for your research. Each IRB is a little different, and they offer recommended templates as part of their resources for authors. If your research does not require IRB approval, your form may include many of the same components that IRB templates include, but the structure may change depending on your project needs and interests. Your participation form should address the following aspects of the research project:

- What, in detail, does your research entail?
- What will research participants be asked to do?
- Are there any risks or potential benefits to participants? Risks are pretty obvious for medical research, but don't forget that research about writing can also elicit discomfort and potential risk for participants. Consider whether your research might make someone uncomfortable. Might your research have the potential to reveal something personal regarding their sexuality, gender, citizenship, religion, etc.?
- Explain what product will be created out of the research—who will the audience for that product be and in what venue will the findings be shared?
- Will the research participants remain anonymous? Do you want them to have the option to be anonymous or not? Perhaps they'll want credit for the ideas they've shared with you.
- Will research participants have an opportunity to comment on drafts of the research or view the completed project?

Finally, make sure to give your research participants an out, meaning—let them know that they don't have to participate and that they can choose to not participate at any time. This includes after the research is complete! Any time before research is published, participants should have your contact information so that they can let you know if they change their minds.

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positivist, **communities of practice**, **constructivist**, **subjectivities**, **ethos**, **invention**, **delivery**, **uptake**, **peer-reviewed**, **intertextuality**, **Institutional Review Boards (IRB)**, **informed consent**, **ethical treatment**, **proximity**, **beneficence**, **research protocols**, **scripts**, **consent forms**

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Derek N. Mueller is Professor of Rhetoric and Writing and Director of the University Writing Program at Virginia Tech. His teaching and research attends to the interplay among writing, rhetorics, and technologies. Mueller regularly teaches courses in visual rhetorics, writing pedagogy, first-year writing, and digital media. He continues to be motivated professionally and intellectually by questions concerning digital writing platforms, networked writing practices, theories of composing, and discipliniographies or field narratives related to writing studies/rhetoric and composition. Along with Andrea Williams, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, and Jen Clary-Lemon, he is co-author of *Cross-Border Networks in Writing Studies* (Inkshed/Parlor, 2017). His 2018 monograph, *Network Sense: Methods for Visualizing a Discipline* (in the WAC Clearinghouse #writing series) argues for thin and distant approaches to discerning disciplinary patterns. His other work has been published in *College Composition and Communication*, *Kairos*, *Enculturation*, *Present Tense*, *Computers and Composition*, *Composition Forum*, and *JAC*.

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Attributions

19.

USING SOURCES ETHICALLY

Yvonne Bruce

Students are often concerned with the details of correct citation—when to include an author's name in parentheses, how to format an MLA bibliography, how to indicate a quotation within a quotation—and while these are all important and helpful to know, what is more important is understanding the larger ethical principles that guide choosing and using sources.

Here are a few of the larger ideas to keep in mind as you select and synthesize your sources:

- You must represent the topic or discipline you are writing about fairly. If nine out of ten sources agree that evidence shows the middle class in the United States is shrinking, it is unethical to use the tenth source that argues it is growing without acknowledging the minority status of the source.

- You must represent the individual source fairly. If a source acknowledges that a small segment of the middle class in the United States is growing but most of the middle class is shrinking, it is unethical to suggest that the former is the writer's main point.
- You must acknowledge bias in your sources. It is unethical to represent sources that, while they may be credible, offer extreme political views as if these views are mainstream.
- Just because your source is an informal one, or from Wikipedia or the dictionary, doesn't mean that you don't have to acknowledge it. Quoting a dictionary definition is still quoting: you need quotation marks. Wikipedia is not "common knowledge," so ideally find a different source cite to support your argument, or cite Wikipedia if you're going to use it.
- You must summarize and paraphrase in your own words. Changing a few words around in the original and calling it your summary or paraphrase is unethical. Make sure that your paraphrase represents your understanding of the text, and if you are struggling with understanding, you're surely not the only one. Talk to your professor, colleagues, and writing

center tutors to help you understand and then translate this understanding to text.

Attributions

20.

TYPES OF SOURCES: PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

An important part of composition is understanding which sources to employ. Generally, sources can be classified as scholarly or popular.

The following video explains sources:

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The determination of a text as "popular" or "scholarly/academic" is one way to classify and to understand what type of information you are engaging with. Another way to classify sources is by considering whether they are **primary**, **secondary**, or **tertiary**. Popular sources can be primary, secondary, or tertiary. Scholarly sources, also, can be primary, secondary, or tertiary.

What is a Primary Source?

Primary sources are texts that arise directly from a particular event or time period. They may be letters, speeches, works of art, works of literature, diaries, direct personal observations, newspaper articles that offer direct observations of current events, survey responses, tweets, other social media posts, original scholarly research, or any other content that comes out of direct involvement with an event or a research study.

Primary research is information that has not yet been critiqued, interpreted or analyzed by a second party.

Primary sources can be popular—published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public; or they can be academic—written by scholars and published in scholarly journals.

The following are types of primary sources:

- journals, diaries
- blog posts
- a speech
- data from surveys or polls
- scholarly journal articles in which the author(s) discuss the methods and results from their own original research/experiments
- photos, videos, sound recordings
- interviews or transcripts
- poems, paintings, sculptures, songs, or other works of art
- government documents, such as reports of legislative sessions, laws or court decisions, and financial or economic reports
- newspaper and magazine articles that report directly on current events (although these can also be considered Secondary)
- investigative journalism (sometimes considered Secondary as well)

What is a Secondary Source?

Secondary sources summarize, interpret, critique, analyze, or offer commentary on primary sources.

The author of a secondary source may be summarizing, interpreting, or analyzing data or information from someone else's research, or offering an interpretation or opinion on current events, rather than reporting on something they've directly experienced. Thus, the secondary source is one step away from that original, primary topic/subject/research study.

Secondary sources can be popular—published in newspapers, magazines or websites for the general public; or they can be academic—written by scholars and published in scholarly journals.

The following are types of secondary sources:

- reviews of books, movies, or art
- summaries of the findings from other people's research
- interpretations or analyses of primary source materials or other people's research
- histories or biographies
- political commentary
- newspaper and magazine articles that mainly synthesize others' research or primary materials (Remember, newspaper and magazine articles can also be considered primary, depending on the content.)

What is a Tertiary Source?

Tertiary sources are syntheses of primary and secondary sources. The person/people who compose a tertiary text are summarizing, compiling, and/or paraphrasing others' work. These sources sometimes do not even list an author.

Often you would want to use a tertiary source to find both Primary and Secondary sources. Keep in mind that it may sometimes be difficult to categorize something as strictly tertiary, and that it may depend on how you decide to use the item in your research and writing. Your instructors will often not accept the sole use of tertiary sources for your papers. Instead, you should strive to only use tertiary sources to find more academic sources, as they often have titles of other works, as well as links if they are web-based, to more academic primary and secondary sources that you can use instead.

Tertiary sources can be popular or academic depending on the content and publisher.

The following are common types of tertiary sources:

- encyclopedias
- fact books
- dictionaries
- guides
- handbooks
- Wikipedia

The following video contains a recap of the previous information shared about primary, secondary, and tertiary sources:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=157#oembed-2

Thinking about Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources and your Research Strategy

Now that you know what kinds of sources exist, it is important to remember that various disciplines find certain types of evidence to be more acceptable and appropriate than others. For instance, while the Humanities may consider anything from passages of text to art appropriate evidence, certain sciences may prefer data and statistics. What is most important to remember, no matter the discipline for which you are writing and pulling evidence, is that the evidence is never enough by itself. You must always be sure to explain why and how that evidence supports your claims or ideas.

The following is a list of questions you should consider before conducting research:

1. What kinds of primary sources would be useful for your research project? Why? Where will you find them? Are you more interested in popular primary sources or scholarly primary sources? Why?

2. What kinds of secondary sources could be useful for your project? Why? Are you more interested in popular secondary sources or scholarly secondary sources? Why?
3. What kinds of tertiary sources might you try to access? In what ways would this tertiary source help you in your research?

Attributions

21.

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH IN ACADEMIC DATABASES

Emilie Zickel

Becoming familiar with the way that research **databases** work can take some time. However, with some understanding of what academic research databases can do for you, and with some practice and tinkering around, you will soon be more comfortable doing your research in these databases instead of through internet search engines. While the content on the rest of this page applies most specifically to MTSU Walker Library's JEWL Search, the tips are relevant to any research database.

How Can You Use an Academic Research Database Effectively?

The following are suggestions for how to make effective use of a database:

- Avoid typing your whole **research question** into the search field. Use only keywords, in various combinations.
- Use several keywords at once, and be willing to change each word for a synonym if you hit a dead end with one set of words.
- Use "AND" or "OR" to retrieve more results or to limit your results.
- Use the database's own Subject Terms to help you to refine your searches within that database.

What is the JEWL Search?

Our library's JEWL Search allows you to find books, articles, images, videos, scores, audio recordings, encyclopedia entries, and more from a single search. Results include thousands of online resources in each category, as well as items physically held by the libraries on campus. Previously, users had to search multiple boxes or databases to find these different types of resources. Use the filters on the left of the search results screen to narrow by item type, publication date, subject, and more.

The video below offers a quick overview of how you can use JEWL Search to

- limit your search results to only get peer reviewed (scholarly) articles,
- refine your search to specific dates or source types,
- access articles that you find,
- and get research help from a librarian.

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A Note about Google Scholar vs JEWL Search

Many students report using and liking Google Scholar. If Google Scholar works for you—and it certainly can work well—then by all means continue to use it along with JEWL Search. What may happen, however, is that while you can find article titles via Google Scholar searches, you may not get access to the full article because you do not have a paid subscription to the journal in which the article is published.

JEWL Search, and the many other academic research databases that can be accessed from the university library, will give you access to most articles. If you find a title via Google Scholar that you cannot access, try to find it in JEWL Search or another database.

Attributions

22.

USING EFFECTIVE KEYWORDS IN YOUR RESEARCH

Robin Jeffrey

Good research involves creative searching. If you have taken the time to think through what types of information you want and what types of sources you want that information from, then you are already off to a great start in terms of searching creatively.

But another key step in good research is in thinking about using effective **keywords**.

Some tips for getting the results that you want from a search

- Use quotation marks. If you are searching a phrase, put it in quotation marks: "textbook affordability" will get you results for that exact phrase.
- Use AND/+. If you are searching for two terms that you think are topically related, use AND (or +) to connect them: "education AND racism" or "education + racism" will only bring up results that include both terms.
- Use NOT/- to limit what you don't want. If you are searching for a term that's commonly associated with a topic you don't want to learn about, use NOT (or -) in front of the keyword you don't want results from: "articles NOT magazines" or "articles – magazines" will bring up results that are about articles, but exclude any results that also include the term magazines.
- Use an asterisk to get a variety of word endings. If you want to get back as many results on a topic as possible, use * at the end of a word for any letters that might vary: smok*, will bring up results that include the terms *smoke*, *smoking*, and *smokers*.
- Remember to search terms, NOT entire phrases or sentences. And swap out synonyms for your core keywords.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=137#oembed-1

"Search Keywords Tutorial" by Ray W. Howard Library at Shoreline Community College

Research Strategy: Coming Up with Keywords for Your Topic

The following are questions that might help you arrive at the correct keywords and searching strategies for your research:

- What are at least two phrases related to your research topic that you can search "in quotation marks"?
- What are your NOT words—the words that you want to exclude from your search?
- For which words would the asterisk be helpful?
- What are three core keywords that you can use in a search for your topic? What are synonyms for each of those three words?

Attributions

23.

SOURCE CREDIBILITY: HOW TO SELECT THE BEST SOURCES

Cayla Buttram; David MacMillan III; and Leigh Thompson Stanfield

Abstract

In “Source Credibility: How To Select The Best Sources,” Cayla Buttram, David MacMillan III, & Leigh Thompson provide some easy tips for choosing sources while conducting research. The six checkpoints they offer should

be of assistance when trying to decide which sources are worth further investment of time and consideration.

This reading is also available as a PDF.

Finding sources for research is important, but using unreliable sources will hurt your credibility and make your arguments seem less powerful. It is important to be able to identify which sources are credible. This ability requires an understanding of depth, objectivity, currency, authority, and purpose.

Whether or not your source is peer-reviewed, it is still a good idea to evaluate it based on these five factors. An article that has been peer-reviewed is credible, but it still might not be completely relevant to your assignment.

Depth

What is the depth of coverage of the information? A source that is completely reliable may still only give a light overview of the important information. In many cases, you will need to have more than a simple overview of information in order to connect the data to your topic.

Objectivity

Is the information you are using biased in any way? If so, does the bias affect the conclusions of the research? Does the information come from a source that will profit from a particular point of view? If so, the information may not be reliable. Does the source use proper citation?

Currency

How up-to-date is the information? When was it written? Many assignments, especially in the sciences, require research from the past five or ten years.

Authority

Who is the author? Does the author have a degree in the field? Is the author affiliated with an unbiased reputable organization? Note that scholarly articles tend to have multiple authors.

Purpose

What is the purpose of the source? Is it to entertain, to change public opinion, to present research, or to teach? Who is the intended audience? Reliable research articles are usually very specific in nature and relate to a very specific field.

These five areas give you a way to reduce a large body of sources into the specific information that you need to include. This process will enhance the credibility of your writing and lead you to more accurate conclusions.

What is Peer Review?

Peer review is a well-accepted indicator that a source is scholarly and reliable. Before publication, peer-reviewed journals require that papers be reviewed by experts in the same field. After reading and reviewing the material for accuracy and objectivity, the reviewers will recommend publication, revision, or rejection.

A peer-reviewed article is often called a **"refereed"** article.

To determine whether a given article is from a peer-reviewed source, try searching Ulrich's directory of periodicals. It contains many, but not all, peer-reviewed journals. If unsuccessful, find the website of the journal itself and look for its author, submission, and/or editorial guidelines.

Keywords

depth, **objectivity**, **currency**, authority, **purpose**

Author Bios

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24.

ASSESSING SOURCE CREDIBILITY FOR CRAFTING A WELL-INFORMED ARGUMENT

Kate Warrington, Natasha Kovalyova, & Cindy King

Abstract

Kate Warrington, Natasha Kovalyova, and Cindy King's

article, "Assessing Source Credibility for Crafting a Well-Informed Argument" comes from the open textbook project *Writing Spaces*. The description is below.

This reading is available below and as a PDF. Further teaching resources can be found in PDF.

Overview

This article walks students through how to use critical reading strategies to help them select credible sources for their research papers and helps them understand how critical reading assignments they may have completed earlier in the semester have prepared them for the difficult task of selecting sources. Through analysis of how logos, ethos, and pathos are used in potential sources, students will understand that these persuasive techniques can influence the overall credibility of a source. Seven questions are presented that aid in critical reading, and examples of student writing are provided that demonstrate the connection between the use of persuasive techniques and their effect on the credibility of a particular source. The chapter concludes with a brief evaluation of two Internet sources on the topic of animal shelters, providing students with an anchor for evaluating sources as they prepare their own research papers.

In your writing course, you're likely to encounter a variety of assignments—reading, responding, writing essays—and each of these assignments is a building block to improved writing skills.* Research writing requires all of the skills learned in these kinds of assignments; it demands you put theory into practice, gather sources, synthesize them, and lend your voice to the ongoing conversation.

Critical Reading for Writing

Establishing Credibility

You've probably noticed that establishing credibility (ethos) is one of the most important things an author can do, and nearly every aspect of the essay—its audience awareness, organization, and content—can affect the author's credibility. Therefore, when determining the credibility of published sources for your research paper, you'll have to be thorough and focused. Even though you may not realize it, if you have engaged in discussions or written responses to assigned readings in the past, you may already have had plenty of practice assessing an author's credibility. For example, take a look at this excerpt from Jack's reading response. Jack is responding to Dorothy Allison's essay "What Did You Expect?" that was assigned in his Composition I class:

> I feel that Dorothy Allison is a very creative and honest writer, who believes in the importance of writing about the truths of life…she doesn't have any qualms talking about where and how she was raised. Even though she is a very accomplished writer, Allison is very self conscious of how people perceive her. Her childhood seems to be the cause of

> her low self-esteem and inadequacies which are stated in her writing… I was happy to know that Allison decided to go with a photo shoot of her in a Laundromat. This is showing that she is a down-to-earth everyday person, which to me is more appealing than an unrealistic Barbie doll figure that a lot of famous women try to personify. In sticking to her guns about not doing the powdered sugar photo shoot, Dorothy Allison is proving that she is not a sell out, and has moral value and self worth. (Jack (pseudonym). Reader Response to "What Did You Expect?").

Jack has approached this reading assignment as an active and engaged reader. He evaluates Allison's credibility in the essay and uses examples from the text that lead him to the conclusion that "Dorothy Allison is a creative and honest writer." Jack recognizes that Allison is an "accomplished writer" who is well-educated. He learns these facts by reading the introduction to the essay that included facts about Dorothy Allison, a writer whom Jack was not familiar with before he read this essay. Jack takes this information with him as he reads the text and looks for other clues to Allison's credibility as an author. Allison's willingness to share information about her childhood, and her "down-to-earth" quality that she expresses in her writing despite her apparent fame persuades Jack that what Allison writes is genuine and important.

The qualities Jack looks for in Allison's writing to evaluate her credibility are qualities that you can use to evaluate any author's credibility. You can ask yourself:

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?

In Jack's case, he knows who the author is because he read the introductory material, and he believes Allison is knowledgeable about the subject because she writes about herself in a way that Jack perceives to be honest and forthright. It doesn't hurt that Allison writes about herself, a topic that any reader would expect Allison to know more about than anyone else.

Determining the credibility of an author can involve more than just knowing the author's credentials and whether or not they are knowledgeable about the topic. Authors establish credibility with the way they construct their arguments. If an argument is illogical or seems to be biased in some way, this damages the author's credibility. One common mistake writers make is to represent only one side of an argument, which could make the audience believe that the author is either not knowledgeable about other possible arguments or not interested in these arguments. If an author is forthright about presenting a biased viewpoint, then you might believe the author to be more credible than one who claims to be presenting both sides of the story but does not.

Assessing Source Bias

The way authors choose to make their point is also important when evaluating sources for credibility. For example, you've probably seen the ASPCA commercials featuring melancholy music and heartbreaking pictures of sad or abused animals. The goal of these commercials is to persuade viewers to donate money to the ASPCA—and the appeal to emotions is hard to miss. The ASPCA and homeless pets have certainly benefitted from the generosity of viewers whose heartstrings were tugged by the use of emotion in these commercials.

Appealing to the reader's emotions (using pathos) can be very effective at helping the reader connect to the author's main point, but when we select sources for research projects, we must make sure that an author's appeal to emotion is not a sign of bias. Biased sources may cause readers to feel guilty about holding certain viewpoints or engaging in certain activities, which may be the goal of the source. For example, Lisa writes in her reading journal about Kasper Hauser's "Skymaul"—a parody of the SkyMall catalog that used to be found in most airlines' seatback pockets. She understands that Kasper Hauser is poking fun at consumer culture while realizing that she is an active part of that culture:

> We don't necessarily need any of the things advertised in the media or even in magazines though we more than often desire the things that might not even benefit our everyday lives… I find the pepper self-spray quite ironic; maybe it's just me but sometimes I feel like I'm actually pepper spraying myself when I purchase such things like are sold in the Skymall catalogue because maybe it just wasn't worth it or it didn't function as advertised. (Lisa (pseudonym). Reader Response to "Skymaul?").

In her response, Lisa knows that Kasper Hauser is presenting a particular side of the argument about consumer culture. Viewing the parody makes her feel a bit stupid for participating in this kind of culture—like she's "pepper spraying" herself. Kasper Hauser's "Skymaul" is biased because it only presents one side of the argument about consumerism, and it makes the reader aware of his or her place in the culture the group critiques—even causing the viewer to feel guilty or stupid for being part of that culture.

Using biased sources in your research can be problematic, particularly if you do not acknowledge that the source is biased. When you are engaging in critical reading assignments and/or evaluating sources for your research, ask yourself these questions to determine the degree to which a source is biased:

3. Is the author using emotional appeals/ manipulation in his or her argument?
4. Does the author use "loaded" language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?

Sometimes authors dismiss opposing arguments by claiming that these arguments are "uninformed" or "nonsensical." Some less savvy authors will be as bold as to claim another viewpoint is "stupid." Watch for these kinds of words because they are signs of bias.

Evaluating an Argument's Support

How authors put arguments together and what support they use to bolster their arguments can affect the credibility of the source. If an author makes an argument that remains logical and consistent from beginning to end, then readers are likely to be persuaded. When an author presents an illogical argument or an argument that seems to change as it develops, the author's credibility and persuasiveness is damaged. For instance, in John Freyer's "All My Life for Sale" some readers might sense that the stated purpose of the essay doesn't seem to match up with its tone. Telling his story, Freyer reflects on a project where he set up a Web site and sold all of his belongings over the Internet. He kept track of where many of his belongings went and attempted to visit his old belongings and the people who purchased them. While the reader might appreciate the author's creativity and a sense of adventure, deriving further "gains" from the initial project and publishing an essay might appear to some as merely a promotional campaign. A cautious reader might even suspect a hidden agenda behind the Freyer's project in which personal attachments were mined for money-making opportunities.

Despite Freyer's disclaimer that his motivations were more complex than just to make some money, readers who believe that his project as a whole and his essay in particular is an attempt at self-promotion will be questioning the essay with the following:

5. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
6. Are all the statements believable?
7. Is the argument consistent and complete?

Like questions 1-4, questions 5, 6, and 7 also can help you to determine whether an author is credible; these three questions address whether the argument is logically acceptable. The more logical an argument is, the more likely the reader will be persuaded.

When you evaluate a piece of writing using these seven questions, you are using critical reading and thinking skills. These are the same skills you will use when you are evaluating sources for the research essay you are preparing. You are going to want to establish your own credibility in your writing. If you use sources that aren't credible, then your own credibility will suffer.

Finding Sources

While searching for sources, you will be making a lot of decisions. Some of them are easy; others are tough. Yet, regardless of what your decisions are going to be about—the focus, the argument, the support materials—at the core lies your credibility as a writer. In fact, there will be two kinds of credibility to juggle—that of your sources and that of your own. If you want to come across as a knowledgeable writer, the company you assemble (that is, the sources you bring in) will speak volumes about you and your understanding of the subject.

Striking as it might sound, credibility is not an innate quality. Credibility is established. Demonstrate a firm grasp of the matter at hand, and your audience will perceive you as a knowledgeable person, worthy of their attention. Show that you know who argues against your case, and your audience will take your argument more seriously. "But what if I am not particularly knowledgeable about the subject matter?" you might ask. "What if I am making my first scholastic steps?" Well, there is plenty of good news for you: good sources *lend you their credibility.*

How do you find good sources, then? Earlier in this chapter, we listed seven questions that can help you to determine the credibility of your sources:

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?
3. Is the author using emotional appeals/ manipulation in his or her argument?
4. Does the author use “loaded” language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?
5. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
6. Are all the statements believable?
7. Is the argument consistent and complete?

These questions will help you select the sources that contribute best to your credibility as a writer. You may come across an insightful comment on your topic in a book, on a flyer, in an email, or a blog. You may hear important information in a radio program or on a late-night TV show. No media should be banned from your search effort, but you should be very picky about making the source yours. Remind yourself that sources are people and that you are about to jump into a conversation they have been having. To do so effectively, take a critical view of their conversation first. In other words, evaluate your sources.

Evaluating sources and critical reading go hand-in-hand. You read a piece critically in order to understand it. You evaluate the same piece in order to make an informed decision about "inviting" the writer to have a conversation with you on a topic. Simply put, when evaluating, you "read with an attitude" (Palmquist 49). The following advice might be useful:

> Accept nothing at face value; ask questions about your topic; look for similarities and differences in the source you read; examine the implications of what you read for your research project; be on the alert for unusual information; and note relevant sources and information. Most importantly, be open to ideas and arguments, even if you don't agree with them. Give them a chance to affect how you think about the conversation you have decided to join. (Palmquist 53)

Okay, given the variety of sources and the virtual sea of information, do you have to read and evaluate all sources in the same way? The short answer is, "It depends." The general rules of critical reading and evaluating apply to the majority of sources. However, as more and more information is posted on the Web, additional precautions are needed.

Let's revisit, for a moment, the library setting. You have probably been told that print materials collected by librarians have great advantages. They are of a high quality because librarians review and carefully select books and journals for the library to buy. Library collections are systematically organized and cataloged. In case you are having trouble navigating the collection, the library staff can help you find what you are looking for or suggest where to look.

These are all good points. But libraries and print materials do have some disadvantages. Collections are limited by the physical space and the budget. Libraries cannot buy all the books printed in the world nor can they subscribe to all periodicals out there. They specialize in some subjects, while collecting very basic materials in other fields. To find a movie that came out, say, in the early 1940s, you might need to travel to a place that holds a copy of it or use the interlibrary loan system and borrow it for a short period of time.

Don't online resources have an advantage here? Yes and no. When your computer is connected to the Internet, you have a world of information at your fingertips. Type in a search term, and hundreds, if not thousands, of documents appear on your screen in a split second. News that broke an hour ago, game schedules, flight information, stock quotes, currency exchange rates, current temperature at your location, a list of courses offered at your school next semester, a menu at a nearby restaurant—you can access all that without leaving home.

In addition to being conveniently accessible, online information comes from a variety of sources that sometimes rival those in a library. Videos, audio files, and images all reside on the Internet. Say you are writing about global warming. In addition to scholarly journal articles, news briefs, environmental agencies' reports, statistics, transcripts of Congressional hearings, activists' blogs and discussion forums, a simple Google search can also bring you videos, maps, PowerPoint presentations, and the like. To find all those resources in one library would be very difficult, if not impossible.

The Web, however, has its own disadvantages. One particularly notable concern is that because anyone can upload materials online, no one can be assured of their quality. No trained staff is out there to assist you in sieving through what you have pulled onto your screen. The sheer volume of information might be overwhelming, making you sometimes feel that there exists nothing of value on your particular topic.

There is no shortage of materials—both online and in print—as you have found by now. But which ones are good ones? To make that determination, it's time to be as picky as possible, scrutinizing the structure of their argument (logos), their motives and agendas (ethos), and their fair use of emotional appeals (pathos).

When you are writing a research paper, you will be expected to do precisely that, and more. You will also need to enter in a conversation with your sources and respond to them rather than report what they are saying. While your audience will, no doubt, benefit from knowing what experts have said, they are reading your paper and are interested in hearing what you have to say. Listen to what your sources say (that is, *read* carefully and critically) and try to understand their position. Then, agree or disagree, draw parallels between their views and yours, ask questions and take sides. Translated onto a written page, your conversation will take the shape of your quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. By doing so, you will be contributing to the discussion with your own observations, questions, comments, and concerns.

Selecting Sources Sample Topic: Animal Treatment

Let's explore the topic of animal treatment. After watching an ASPCA commercial, you decided to explore the topic of animal shelters. Your interest in the topic was piqued by a brief memory of a handmade poster you saw earlier at a gas station. "Emily Missing," you remember it saying. Judging by the picture, Emily happened to be a kitten that ran away. "What if someone found Emily but had not seen the poster?" you wondered. Someone could have tried to return her to her owners if she wore a tag, or Emily could have been turned in to the nearest animal shelter or humane society. With Emily's fortune at the back of your mind, you want to learn more about animals in animal shelters and possibly write your findings in a paper.

You have a zillion questions to ask. How many animal shelters are currently in operation in the United States, or even in a given state? How many animals are kept there? What are the most common animals in a shelter? Do most animals in shelters get adopted? How do shelters ensure that an animal goes to good hands and not to abusive owners or research labs? What happens to those who cannot find a new owner because of their age, illness, or behavioral problems? How do shelters raise money? What happens to animals when a shelter cannot house them any longer?

Following in the steps of dozens of your fellow classmates, you opened a Google search and typed in "animal shelter" (see figure 1). Among the top results, you saw links to your local animal shelters and other rescue organizations.

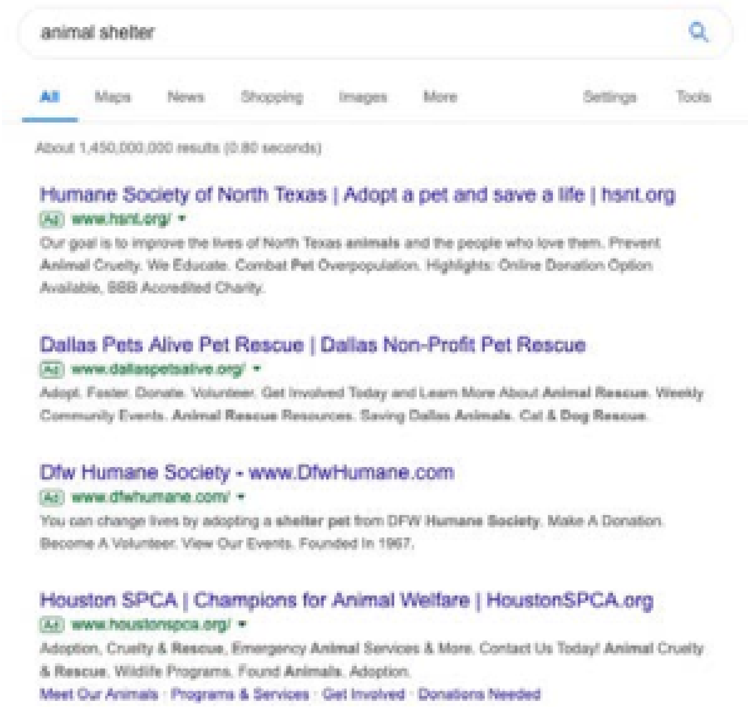

Figure 1. Google search for "animal shelter" shows several ad results, including "Humane Society of North Texas," "Dallas Pets Alive Pet Rescue," DFW Humane Society," and "Houston SPCA."

When searching for "animal shelter," you receive more than one billion results. You are now faced with a formidable evaluation task, but you can't possibly look at all of these sources. You could choose to narrow your search terms to something like "animal shelters and lost pets" (which yields 66,200,000 results) or take Google's apparent suggestion and focus your search on animal shelters in your local area. Let's say you decide to focus on the Humane Society of North Texas, the first result from your original search (see figure 2).

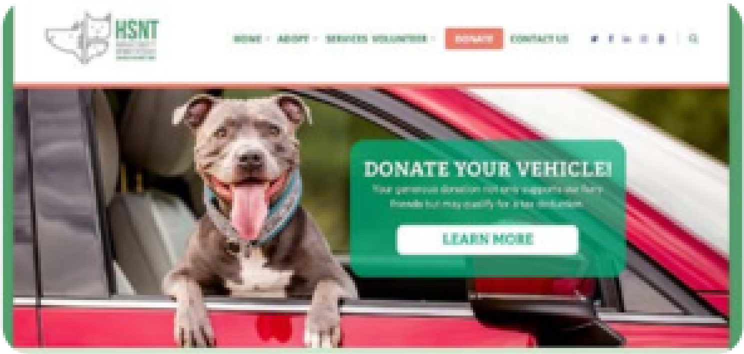

Figure 2. The Humane Society of North Texas homepage shows the organization's logo, a basic navigational menu, and a photo of a large dog looking out a car window into the camera. Text next to the dog encourages viewers to donate their vehicle in support of the Humane Society.

To guide you during this evaluation process are the critical reading questions that we discussed earlier.

1. Who is the author?
2. How do I know that he/she is knowledgeable about the subject?
3. Is the author using emotional appeals/manipulation in his or her argument?
4. Does the author use "loaded" language to distract readers from relevant reasons and evidence?
5. Is the support for the argument appropriate to the claim?
6. Are all the statements believable?
7. Is the argument consistent and complete?

Using the Questions to Determine Credibility

Just by looking at the homepage, it is clear that the Humane Society of North Texas sponsors and maintains the site. After clicking on some of the more specific links on the top of the page, you locate some press releases that name individual authors and their titles. For example, if you clicked on the item "Newsroom" from the drop-down menu under "Home," then on the press release titled "We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie (OkCats, Too)!," you will be directed to the page shown here in Figure 3. Notice that the author is Cassie Lackey, who is the Director of Communications for the Humane Society of North Texas. Because Lackey works for the Humane Society of North Texas, she likely has access to accurate information about this organization. Her role as Director of Communications is to inform the community about news related to the Humane Society, so from what we can tell so far, she appears to be a credible author (see figure 3).

HSNT
HUMANE SOCIETY
OF NORTH TEXAS
SAVING LIVES SINCE 1905

Cassie Lackey
Director of Communications
Humane Society of North Texas
Cell: 817-909-0667
Email: communications@hsnt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie
(Ok–Cats, Too)!

Fort Worth, Texas, May 24, 2019:
The Humane Society of North Texas (HSNT), will fly over 160 dogs and cats on Saturday, May 25, 2019, to Washington and Idaho. HSNT is partnering with Wings of Rescue, GreaterGood.org, and the ASPCA® (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) to fly pets to the Pacific Northwest, where adopters are excitedly awaiting big and small furry friends alike! Flying large dogs to other states will ease overcrowding in HSNT's shelter.

Large dogs are surrendered to HSNT consistently and abundantly. What HSNT has recognized is the majority of large dogs coming through its doors are much harder to adopt into homes due to their size. Larger dogs are susceptible to spending longer times in the shelter waiting for their forever homes. There is a tremendous need for adopters and fosters of large dogs. To learn more about the available pets at the Humane Society of North Texas, visit hsnt.org.

"The Humane Society of North Texas is beyond grateful for these lifesaving flights. We desperately need to find homes for our larger dogs," said Cassie Lackey, Director of Communications at HSNT. "As our intake continues to grow, we need to pursue finding forever homes and placement for the voiceless pets in our care."

Figure 3. "We Like Big Mutts and We Cannot Lie (Ok-Cats, Too)!" press release was found by following the "Newsroom" link from hsnt.org. The release discusses a partnership with several organizations that will allow them to fly larger dogs to other states to be adopted, thus increasing rates of adoption. Source: The Human Society of North Texas.

While it appears as if this source has a credible author, we should look for other clues to help us feel certain about its credibility. The extension .org in the URL indicates that this Web site is not set up for commercial purposes—that is, not for deriving profit from the activity on the site. In fact, the central features of the site are the menu items at the top of the home page: Adopt, Services Volunteer, and

Donate. The information appears very straightforward and oriented toward a clear purpose: to help people adopt animals or volunteer their time and money to help homeless animals.

By now, it's easy to conclude that hsnt.org may be a useful source if you live in the North Texas area and want to focus your research on local animal shelters. But, you can't hang your hat on just one source.

After browsing through several local animal shelter sites, you expand your search and click on the Web site for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA): www.peta.org. The banner has a direct slogan: "Animals are not ours to experiment on, eat, wear, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way." That slogan provides some insight into the mission of the organization. The breadth and depth of information you find here is impressive: feature stories, news briefs, files on a series of animal cruelty issues, factsheets, blog posts, and a sizeable collection of videos. It is here, however, that a peculiar approach to presenting information becomes prominent, namely, the extensive use of celebrities to attract attention and (hopefully) advance the organization's cause.

You might also notice that on this site a lot of effort is put into raising awareness about animal cruelty and stirring grassroots activism. You will find tips for activists, templates of correspondence to send to public officials, and news of upcoming events. Does that constitute a bias? Well, it definitely points to a well-shaped agenda, and you need to recognize that, whether you agree or disagree with the mission the site is promoting. Without doubt, some of the material you come across can be considered controversial. Therefore, when you consider the question, "Are all the statements believable?" think not only about your own assessment of the material but also about what your audience may think. If your audience believes that some of the source material you choose to include in your paper is not believable, then your credibility will be damaged. After carefully evaluating PETA's Web site, you will likely decide that while it contains some useful and credible information, you will need to use this site with care and acknowledge its agenda.

All information that you have discovered so far is valuable, but you know that to write a well-informed research paper, you'll have to search further.

Conclusion

To succeed as a researcher, and ultimately a persuasive, credible writer, you have learned that you can't fly solo—that, in fact, no one can go it alone. You will come to understand that strong, well-defended arguments need support, just as, for instance, most singers need a solid back-up band. And like any good front person, you should audition and choose carefully those who will stand behind you. In other words, interrogate those sources. Ask the tough questions. If you do so, you can resist the charges of loaded language, recognize when sources tug at your heartstrings, and leave unreliable statements behind.

This chapter has taken you step-by-step through the process of how to critically evaluate your sources. With practice, this type of thinking will become a natural part of your approach to both assigned reading and research material as well to what's outside the classroom. And the more critical you are in your reading and research, the more it will become a part of how you view the world, be it in the classroom, online, or virtually everywhere. This ability to encounter the world with a critical eye is a valuable tool, one that allows you to more fully engage with it. And your capacity for determining credibility can help you make informed decisions in your writing, work, and life.

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Keywords

sources, **credibility**, **ethos**, **argument**

Author Bios

Kate Warrington received her PhD in composition and rhetoric from the University of Louisville. She was an assistant professor at Lindsey Wilson College and UNT Dallas before becoming the Director of General Education Operations at Western Governors University. Kate's research interests have included methodological ethics, narrative theory, and ethnographic writing.

Natasha (Natalia) Kovalyova is Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of North Texas at Dallas. Her areas of expertise include communication studies, rhetoric and language and political communication. Her research interests at UNT Dallas, which she joined in 2010, focus on "the intersections of discourse, power and persuasion in a variety of contexts, from presidential communication to media reporting to interpersonal communication. Her recent research focuses on the emergent public forums and the rise of authoritarian voice in post-communist societies."

Dr. Cynthia P. King has been a Furman faculty member in the Department of Communication Studies since 2006. Race, public discourse, and media are her current research interests. She teaches courses in public speaking, rhetoric, African American rhetoric, and race and media. She co-created and co-led the Ghana Study Away May X in 2017. In 2015, she was awarded Furman's Meritorious Teaching Award.

Attributions

25.

WORKNETS AND INVENTION

Jennifer Clary-Lemon; Derek Mueller; and Kate L. Pantelides

Abstract

In "Working with Sources: Worknets and Invention," from *Try This: Research Methods For Writers*, by Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides offer an alternative to annotated bibliographies for identifying appropriate sources for a research project: worknets. Worknets offer an exploded view of a source, inviting deep engagement and familiarity with a source, which can be the starting place for further secondary source research. The

article walks writers through the process of developing a worknet, offering four different ways of interacting with a source: first authors identify representative words in the chapter during the “semantic phase,” then they look closely at the sources that the work draws on during the “bibliographic phase,” next they consider the author’s network during the “affinity phase,” and finally, they identify concurrent events that coincide with the development of the source during the “choric phase.”

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

To work with materials successfully, practitioners in many fields study how something is made. They may turn to instructions and diagrams, or they may take apart and put back together equipment. They may follow steps essential to understanding better how things fit together, which parts of a system are dependent on which other parts, and how—when things go well—the system operates.

For example, a materials engineer at a bicycle manufacturer may look at other models or even collect samples of bicycles and take them for a ride. The materials engineer might ponder, alone or in consultation with others, alternatives for any individual part or material necessary to the bike's functioning. She might take notes, draw and scribble about connections, or make mock-up prototypes.

In another comparable scenario, a pizza maker might follow a dough recipe several times before making a change to an essential component, such as trying a new oil or yeast or flour, or perhaps modifying resting time or the kneading process. The ingredients and process are both built up intricately and periodically unbuilt to ensure great familiarity with how things work.

Writing researchers frequently read, study, and consult sources as a way to stay apprised of new knowledge as well as long-established histories relevant to their questions. Sources are tremendously important among the materials writing researchers work with.

The reason researchers cite sources is simple: to establish credibility—build their ethos—writers have to show that they are members of their academic communities. They do this by pointing to other writers who have had, and are having, the research conversation they are interested in joining. You'll notice as you read any academic article that it usually begins with a **literature review**, or a synthesis of sources that shows explicitly that the writer knows the main arguments, or critical conversation, circulating about a particular topic and is then able to carve out a space for their own research question. But what can citing sources *do* for you? Here are some possibilities:

- It recognizes the history of how sources build on each other by relating new research to past research (homage; timeliness of current research).
- It lends credibility to the author—you!—who, by referencing sources, demonstrates care, ethics, rigor, and knowledge (authority; credibility).
- It revisits claims, data, and key concepts that serve as a foundation to the new research (build-up).
- It positions new research in relationship to the research gaps that it highlights (differentiation).

It's not enough, in working with a topic—say, climate change—to simply know it is of interest to a variety of scholars. A writer needs to become familiar with the key terms used by the scholarly community working on climate research, such as *greenhouse gas* and *carbon threshold,* and the historic data that is fundamental to that research. This might be represented by, for example, how the measurements of carbon levels in the atmosphere that have been taken by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at the Moana Loa Observatory since 1958 led to noticing that we have surpassed the 400 PPM, or parts per million, carbon threshold that is key to human thinking about climate change. Learning these things allows you to write your way into a complex topic and shows that you know enough to join the conversation.

But how do you begin? This chapter helps you begin to invent ideas by engaging deeply with sources. Seeking and finding appropriate sources and knowing them well enough to incorporate them into your writing is slow work. It can be especially slowed down when you are at the beginning, finding your way into an unfamiliar conversation for the first time. It takes time to trace even a sample of the relations that reach through and across sources.

In this chapter, we focus on one way that you can work with a text, or **source**, through working with the webs of relationships that extend out from it, or its web of connections with other sources. We call this kind of working with multiple texts **sourcework**, and it can show itself in a variety of ways—often through library research, keyword searches, paging through a source's bibliography or Works Cited page, or following a trail of online links or even a hunch about a key idea. Yet sourcework takes time, and that's something many student writers don't have a lot of when they are trying to navigate a complex topic and key details of a nuanced argument—all from one source! Given the time it takes to work with sources effectively, here we introduce you to a method of sourcework that we call **worknets**, a four-part model of working your way through one source such that it leads you towards other sources and ideas that will be useful to the thinking and framing of your project.

The Power of Worknets

Worknets give us a visual model for understanding how sources interrelate, how key words and ideas become attached to certain people, and why *provenance*—when something was written and where it came from—matters. At the center of any worknet is the source that you or your instructor sees as focal to the conversations happening in your research. Radiating outward from that source, as spokes from a wheel, are what we call nodal connections. Each nodal connection gives you another research path to follow and another way to connect with your source more deeply and less superficially. Often students are called upon to "incorporate five or seven or x sources" as though this is a quick and easy task—it isn't! But when you can treat a central source as one that leads you in a series of directions, each with its own path toward another source, concept, person, or event, you are more likely to read the whole thing. This will help you understand sources more fully, investigate what you don't understand, and more easily locate another source. It will also help you gather sources together and see how they connect to each other and what gaps in the sources emerge, which helps you piece together a literature review with your research question front and center.

Worknets provide you with a method for working within and across academic sources. As a way of helping you "invent" what you have to say, worknets are a source-based way of helping you to generate a path for your research that points you toward a particular question, gap, or needed extension of what has come before. A finished worknet consists of four phases: a **semantic** phase, which looks at significant words and phrases repeated in the text; a **bibliographic** phase, which connects your central or focal source to the other works the author has cited in her piece; an **affinity** phase, which shows how personal relationships shape sourcework; and a **choric** phase, which allows researchers to freely associate historic and sociocultural connections to the central source text.* After developing a finished worknet, which involves all four phases placed visually together, you will have many openings for further research, and you will have gained a handle on the central source such that incorporating it into your writing via direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary is easier for you to achieve and more interesting for an audience to read. Worknets can follow the proposal you developed in Chapter 1, or they can offer you a method for reading sources that supports your drafting and refining a research focus and related proposal.

* In terms of delivery, a complete worknet project can stand alone, it can serve as a useful building block for an annotation that is part of a

larger annotated bibliography, or it can function as a starting point for a literature review.

Try This: Summarizing a Central Source (1 hour)

Return to the research proposal that you generated in Chapter 1 or “Making an Argument for Your Research” in Chapter 2. Spend some time coming up with key terms or phrases that succinctly capture your research interests, practicing with Boolean operators such as *and, or,* and *not* (e.g., “trees and diseases and campus”; “texting or IM and depression”; “composition and grades not music”). Begin with your library’s databases in your major and, using these key terms, start narrowing your search to academic articles (rather than reviews, newspaper articles, or web pages, for example) using these key terms. Skim at least five sources as you look for your central source, taking notes on the following:

- What is the purpose of the research

article?

- What methods did the researchers use to answer their research question?
- What did the researchers find out?
- What is the significance of the research?
- What research still needs to be done?

Taking these notes will allow you to see if the source you've read really connects with your curiosities and research direction. They also clearly lay out the basis of most academic articles: a hypothesis (the research question), methods (the tools used to answer a research question), results (what you found out), and discussion (why it matters). Putting these together in 50-100 words allows you to generate a **summary** of the key points of an academic article, letting you select the article that is the most interesting and central to your research question to begin your worknets.

To develop a worknet, begin by selecting a researched academic article published since 1980.* This date may seem arbitrary, but we consider it a turning point because major citation systems shifted in the 1980s from numbered annotations to alphabetically ordered lists of references or works cited. As you read the article you select, you will, in four distinct but complementary ways, focus on a different dimension of the source's web of meaning, one at a time. Worknets typically pair a visual model and a written account that discusses the elements featured in the visual model. For the guiding examples that follow, we have developed visual diagrams using Dana Driscoll's "Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews," published in 2011. Driscoll explains in her article the differences between primary and secondary research, details types of qualitative research methods, and provides student examples of research projects to help readers conceptualize her advice about conducting primary research. Because her article ties so closely to what this book is about—research methods—we've selected it as a central source to model the worknets process.

* Keywords are increasingly important as part of knowledge-making. In published academic articles, keywords are tracked and collected so that we can easily find them through online database searches, telling us what central idea an article is forwarding.

Phase 1: Semantic Worknet—What Do Words Mean?

When creating a semantic worknet (Figure 3.1), you pay attention to words and phrases that are repeated throughout the central source ("semantics" is the study of meaning in words). Because academic writers repeat and return to concepts that they want readers to remember, by repetition we begin to understand the idea of a **keyword** or **keyphrase***—those words and phrases that are doing the work of advancing a source's central ideas. By noticing these key words and phrases, we understand first where they come from and how they have been initiated and second how they are being used to create a common understanding between members of a particular academic discipline, community, or group of specialists. Although such keywords and phrases can at first seem inaccessible, strange, or confusing, noticing them and investigating their meaning is a sure way to begin grasping what the article is about, what knowledge it advances, and the audiences and purposes it aspires to reach.

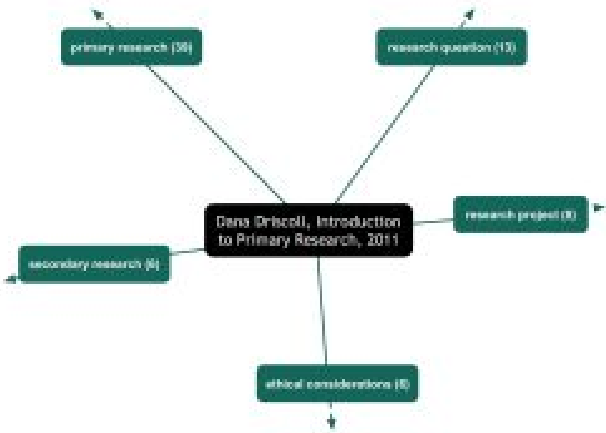

Figure 3.1. A semantic worknet. A center node identifies the article author and brief title. Five radiating nodes show frequently used twoword phrases, followed in parentheses by the number of times the phrase appeared: primary research (39), research question (13), research project (8), ethical considerations (6), and secondary research (6).

There are several different ways to come up with a list of keywords and phrases. One approach is to manually circle or underline words and phrases as you read, noting them as they appear and reappear in the text so you can return to them later. Other approaches make use of free online tools, such as TagCrowd (tagcrowd.com/), where you can copy and paste the text of the article and initiate a computer-assisted process that will yield a **concordance**, or a list of words and the number of times they appear in the text. NGram Analyzer (guidetodatamining.com/ngramAnalyzer/) is another effective tool for processing a text into a list of its one-, two-, and three-word phrases. Across multiple sources, beginning to find words and phrases that match up will help you locate key concepts for the literature review section of your research project.

A semantic worknet also helps you understand specialized vocabulary on your own terms, acting as a gateway into the terminology in the article. Noticing these words and phrases is a first step toward learning what the words and phrases mean. In Figure 3.1, you will see arrows extending outward from each term, radiating toward the edge of the image. This minor detail is a crucial feature of the worknet. It says that there is more, a deeper expanse beyond this article. That is, it suggests the generative reach of the words and phrases stemming from the article. Clearly an echo of the title, the phrase "primary research" appears in Driscoll's article 39 times, three times more than the next phrase, "research question," at 13. The article differentiates primary and secondary research. These keywords and phrases remind us of this. But the article also repeats the phrase "research project" and "ethical considerations." Each of these repeated keywords and phrases are included in the worknet.

Try This: Finding Keywords (30 minutes)

You've chosen an article you consider to be interesting and relevant to your emerging research question. In anticipation of developing the semantic phase, spend time analyzing the article by doing the following:

- Read through the article, noting the title and any headings. Make a list of words that you find central to the text.
- Does the article provide a list of keywords at the beginning? If so, do any of them surprise you or differ from what you would have selected? Which ones overlap with the ones you compiled during your reading?
- Choose some of the keywords you've identified from the list supplied by the article or from the list you have generated. Next, without looking up any of the terms in the article or in any dictionary, attempt to write brief definitions of these terms. What does each keyword mean? Note with a star those terms you believe to be highly specialized.

After creating your worknet, we encourage you to create a 300-500 word written accompaniment of the visual worknet, based on the questions in the next "Try This," that helps you think through the "why" of the source's keywords and phrases. The notes you take as a part of the semantic worknet will not only give you a greater understanding of the central source you've read, but will also link to others in the conversation, giving you a fuller body of sources from which to orient your research proposal or project.

In addition to providing insight into the article, the family of ideas it advances, and the disciplinary orientation of the inquiry, noticing keywords and phrases can also inform further research, providing search terms relevant for exploring and locating related sources. It can lead you toward examining why an article covers some things with more repetition (in Driscoll's example, ethics), but not others (for example, finances and how they relate to ethical choices). When gaps appear between what a source says and does not say, those gaps are interesting places to orient your own research question.

Try This: Developing your Semantic Worknet (1-2 hours)

Select three to five keywords and develop the visual model demonstrated in Figure 3.1. After adding the appropriate nodes to the diagram, in 300-500 words, develop a critical reflection on your selected visual semantic worknet, using the following questions to guide you:

- What does each word or phrase mean, generally? What do they mean in the context of this specific article?
- Does the author provide definitions of the terms? More than one definition for

each term? Are there examples in the article that illustrate more richly what the words or phrases do, how they work, or what they look like?

- Who uses these phrases, other than the author? For example, who are the people in the world who already know what "primary research" refers to? What kind of work do they do? Why?

Phase 2: Bibliographic Worknet—How do Sources Intersect and Draw from Each Other?

In the second phase of working with your central article, we ask you to investigate its **bibliography***—the list of sources that the author of your article has paraphrased, quoted, and summarized—by selecting, finding, and skimming or reading sources from the bibliography. (Bibliographies are located at the end of research articles; they may be titled "Works Cited," "References," or "Bibliography," depending on the documentation style.) You can choose any source that is found in the back matter, footnotes, or endnotes of your focal article to work with, and we recommend beginning with five or so. You might select the most significant sources—the ones that the author cited most frequently or drew from extensively—or you might simply select the ones that are most interesting to you. Either approach will be useful—they'll just yield different results. Attention to a source's *bibliography* is a way to begin tracing how sources use other sources to make their arguments. When we pay close attention to bibliographic references, we begin to see the links we might make 1) between keywords and phrases and a bibliography or Works Cited page and 2) between a central author and the sources with which they work. We begin to see that ideas don't just happen—they are connected to ideas that came before them. This foregrounds the interconnection of the article's main ideas and sources it draws upon, shedding light on the many ways in which academic research builds upon precedents by extending, challenging, and reengaging historical texts.

* To notice a source in a bibliography and then to retrieve it and to read it can bloom into a research trajectory before unforeseen.

Developing a bibliographic worknet like the one in Figure 3.2 calls attention to choices the author has made to invoke specific writers and researchers and their work in the article. It tells of a deeper and thicker entanglement, a web whose filaments extend beyond the obvious references into work that has gone before, sometimes recently, sometimes long before. By involving sources in the article, the author orients what are oftentimes central ideas while also associating those ideas (via the sources) with tangible, identifiable, and (sometimes) accessible precedents. This step is like the development of an annotated bibliography, or a list of sources relevant to a research project that include brief notes about the significance of a source to a wider conversation. An annotated bibliography provides an invaluable intermediate step toward developing a literature review.

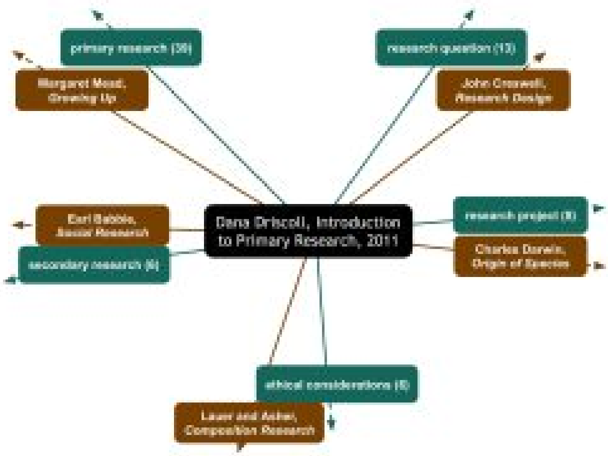

Figure 3.2. A bibliographic worknet added to Figure 3.1, the semantic worknet. The center node continues to refer to the article author and brief title. Five radiating nodes show short-form references to a small sample of sources cited in the article: Earl Babbie, Social Research; John Creswell, Research Design; Charles Darwin, Origin of Species; Lauer and Asher, Composition Research; and Margaret Mead, Growing Up.

In a journal article, the sources an author cites are listed at the end of the article. Their position implies secondary relevance. And yet the references list is an invaluable resource for further tracing and for discovering, by following specific references back into the article, just how unevenly the sources become involved in the article. That is, a references list makes sources appear flat and equal, but among the sources listed, it is common to find that only a quarter of them (or even less, sometimes) figure in substantial and sustained ways throughout the article. Many others are light, passing gestures. The bibliographic worknet can help you differentiate between the two and begin to notice which sources loom large and which are but briefly invoked.

Reading along and across the sources cited is akin to following leads and accepting invitations to further inquiry, formulating new or more nuanced research questions, and discovering influences that are intertwined, eclectic, and complementary. Finding a source and reading it alongside your focus article, too, can yield insights into the highly specific and situated ways writers use sources. For example, if you're researching climate change and just read a paraphrase or a brief quote from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at the Mauna Loa Observatory's 1958 data, you'll only have a part of the story. However, if you find that data and read it yourself, you might find that there are different parts of the data that you think are important to highlight. You might have a different perspective on the research, or you might find that you better understand the original article that led you to this text. Either way, your understanding of the original article, the larger research area, and the intersection between the two sources will deepen.

Try This: Developing Your Bibliographic Worknet (1-2 hours)

After adding the appropriate nodes to your diagram (as in Figure 3.2), in 300-500 words, develop a critical reflection on your selected visual bibliographic worknet, using the following questions to guide you:

- Which of these sources are available in the library? Which are available online?
- What is the average age of the sources? What might the date of the sources say about the timeliness of the article? What is the oldest source? Which is most recent?
- Are there sources that are inaccessible or out of circulation? How did the author locate such sources in the first place?
- How did the focus article use or incorporate the source materials? Were they glossed or briefly mentioned? Were large parts summarized into thin paraphrases? Were the whole of the works mentioned or just key ideas?
- Which of the sources, judging by its title, is most likely to cite other sources

in the list? Which is least likely?

Try This: Developing a Rapid Prototype (30 minutes)

Before we go farther, let's pause and try this out. Notice that the first two phases of developing a worknet are concerned with things you will find in the source—keywords and phrases and sources cited. Work with any text you choose (an assigned reading for this class or another class or a source you can access quickly) to develop a **rapid prototype**, a swiftly hand-sketched radial diagram focusing only on the first two phases. You could share the diagram with someone who has read the same source and compare your radiating terms and citations. You could write about one or two of the terms or citations to anticipate their relevance to your emerging project. Or you could write about (or discuss) what the presence or absence of selected terms or sources says about the source you've chosen.

And/Or, Try This: Investigating Lists of Sources (1 hour)

Works cited or references lists may appear to be simple and flat add-ons at the end of an article or book, but we regard them to be rich resources for thinking carefully about a writer's choices. Look again at the works cited or references list for your chosen article, this time with an interest in coding and sorting it. This means you will look at the references list with the following questions to guide you:

- How recent are the sources in the list? Plot them onto a timeline to indicate the year of publication from oldest to newest. Which decade do most of the resources come from?
- How many of the sources are single-authored? How many are co-authored? How many are authored by organizations, companies, or other non-human entities (i.e., not by named human authors)?
- How many of the sources come from books? How many from journals? How many are available only online? How many are published open access?
- Ethical citation practices include

> awareness of the kind of voices represented through the works you've consulted. Given that you can only know so much about an author through a quick Google search, consider what voices are included. Which voices are amplified, and which are missing altogether? You might consider developing a coding pattern to highlight the ways in which the authors represented identify in regard to gender, race, and ethnicity. Such an effort is fraught, yet it can begin to highlight patterns important for readers of sources to understand who is and is not being cited.

Among these patterns, which are significant for understanding the article, its authorship, or the contexts from which it was developed? What can you tell about the discipline or about the citation system based on coding the works cited or references list as you have?

To create a bibliographic worknet, begin by reading the references list, footnotes, and endnotes and highlighting the sources that pique your curiosity. Once you've sampled from the list, take your sources to your library database to see what you can find. Try to locate three to five other sources from the bibliography, noting to yourself how difficult or easy these sources were to find. Once you've located your bibliographic sources, take a look at the pages that your central source cited and how the ideas on those pages were used in the focal source. Put the borrowed idea in context and try to figure out how and why your central source chose the bibliographic source to work with. Sampling from a bibliography, whether purposeful or random, can lead to promising new questions and promising new sources that can inform, guide, and shape your research questions. When you compose a 300-500 word written accompaniment of the bibliographic worknet, it is in service to thinking through where sources come from, how history marks sourcework, how findable sources really are, and how authors use other sources to create their key arguments.*

* Believe it or not, a references list is a gift from an author to a reader and an invitation to follow paths of inquiry that are already well begun and often many years in motion.

By the time you've collected three to five sources for your bibliographic worknet and noted some emergent key terms from your semantic worknet, you will be in good shape to begin to chart the major ideas, patterns, and distinctions among a group of sources. This will help you determine which sources hang together with a kind of "idea glue" that may help you, as a researcher, figure out which sources best frame your research question and which sources are less important in framing your research direction—this is how literature reviews begin to develop.

Phase 3: Affinity Worknet—How Are Writers Connected?

In the third worknet phase, you pay attention to ties, connections, and relationships—affinities—between the central article's author and others in the research field you are exploring. An affinity worknet takes into account where the author has worked, what sorts of other projects she has taken up, and whom she has learned from, worked alongside, mentored, and taught. Many other authors are continuing research related to the article you have read. They are also keeping the company of people who do related work, whose research may complement or add perspective to the issues addressed in the article. You can see these relationships illustrated in the affinity worknet for our sample article in Figure 3.3.

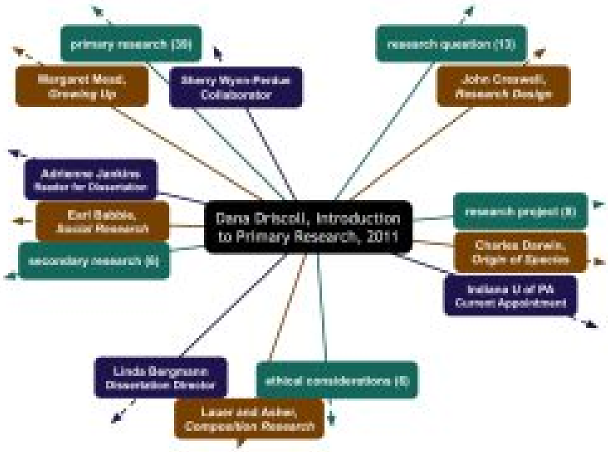

Figure 3.3. An affinity worknet (third phase), added to Figures 3.1 and 3.2. In this phase, four new nodes extend from the center, reflecting ties, connections, and relationships to the author: Adrienne Jankins, Reader for Dissertation; Linda Bergmann, Dissertation Director; Indiana U of PA, Current Appointment; and Sherry Wynn-Perdue, Collaborator.

As distinct from the first (semantic) and second (bibliographic) phases, the affinity worknet moves beyond the text and citations in the article; it is informed by activity and relationships in the world that may not be evident in the article itself. It begins to explore insights into an author's career and the interests that have shaped it. The focal article, for example, may bear close resemblance to other projects the author has worked on. Or her professional experience may suggest interplay among work history, current workplace responsibilities, and intellectual curiosities. Further, the people authors learn from and mentor are interconnected, participating in what is sometimes called an **invisible college**,* or a network of relations that operate powerfully and with varying degrees of formality and that influence the behind-the-scenes ways knowledge circulates throughout and across academic disciplines. The affinity worknet traces provisionally some of the shape of the collectives that have been a part of the author's work life. When you trace these relationships, you'll find that you have a much larger pile of sources to work from and directions for your work to follow—research centers, university programs, online forums, conference presentations, and multi-authored collaborations. As you compose a 300-500 word written record of the affinity worknet, you'll get a sense that academic writers don't emerge suddenly from isolation to compose rigorous work. Instead, they—like you—are real people, with real friends, colleagues, institutions, and collaborative relationships that sustain them. All of those relationships are also places that you might look to in order to orient your research project, as they offer you a glimpse into where your thinking comes from, how it is sustained, and where it gathers in space.

* For example, if you research the three authors of this text, you'll find that they have all co-authored other projects together, worked at the same institutions at times, and collaborated on research presentations.

Try This Together: Where Can I Find Affinities? (30 minutes)

Among the central premises in the affinity phase is that we can learn something about a writing researcher by noticing the company they keep. That is, by looking into professional and social relationships that have operated in their lives, we can begin to understand the larger systems of which their ideas—and their research commitments—are a part.

To treat this as its own research question would be to ask the following: What kinds of relationships can we learn about and by what

> means can we learn about them? Certainly simple Google searches may provide a start, but where else might you look? Work with a partner to generate a list of possible leads—platforms or social media venues where you might check to find out more about the lead author of the article you've chosen to work with.

Where can you find information about an author's affinities? A Google search for the author's name may lead you to an updated and readily available curriculum vitae, which is like an academic resume. Such a search might also lead to the author's social media activity (Facebook or Twitter accounts) or to a professional web site that provides additional details about collaborations and relationships. For perspective on intellectual genealogy related to a doctoral dissertation, you can turn to your library's database resources page and look into ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, which indexes information about major graduate projects and the people who participated on related committees. This lead can yield insight not only into who the author is and how she is connected to others but also into where an author's work comes from in the earliest stages of her career. You'll finish the affinity worknet having both a larger repertoire of research strategies and a wealth of people and places to lead you to other sources that you might not have otherwise thought of.*

* In fact, if you consider their overlapping affinity networks, you might more easily understand how this book came to be, how their collaborations and individual projects over the last decade or so coalesce in an interest in research methods and, in particular, explicit discussion of such methods with undergraduate students.

Finding these affinities will also help you hone your research skills, allowing you to see that lives and connections can be traced through sources other than traditional library databases.

Try This: Writing about Your Affinity Worknet (1-2 hours)

After adding the appropriate nodes to the diagram (as in Figure 3.3), in 300-500 words, develop a critical reflection on your selected visual affinity worknet, using the following questions to guide you:

- What other kinds of work has this author written? When? For what audiences and purposes?

- Does the article in question bear resemblance to their other research? Does it seem to inform or influence their teaching or other responsibilities?
- Who has the author collaborated with on articles or on grants? What are the research interests and primary disciplines of these collaborators?
- Does the author appear to be active in online conversations? Where, and what do these interactions appear focused on? Are they professional and research-related or more casual and social?
- Where did the author study? With whom? What might be some of the ways these places and people influenced the author?

Phase 4: Choric Worknet—How Is Research Rhetorically Situated in the World?

With the fourth phase, worknets grow curioser, adding to the mix what we identify as choric elements. Choric elements take into account the time and place in which the article was produced. Choric worknets gather references to popular culture, world news, or the peculiarities and happenings that coincided with the article's being published. The term choric comes from the

Greek, **khôra**, the wild, open surrounds as yet-unmapped and outside the town's street grid and infrastructure. Notice, too, the word's associations with chorus, or surrounding voices. With this in mind, we regard the choric worknet as exploratory and playful, engaging at the edges so that readers might wander just a bit. Sometimes our best ideas are those that seem, at first glance, to be farfetched.

Compared to the other phases, the choric worknet orbits in wider and weirder circles, drifting into uncharted and therefore potentially inventive linkages. Considering the time and place in which an article was written helps bring us as readers to that time and place. Venturing into the coincidental surrounds can lead to eureka moments, inspiring clicks of insight, curiosity, and possibility, but it can also prove to be too far flung, too peculiar to be useful. This is one of the lessons of research: sometimes we spend time on what we think will be useful, but as any Googler-down-the-rabbit-hole- of-YouTube knows, sometimes what we think will be useful isn't. Yet it is in the trying that we learn how to weed out as well as how to hold close what is exciting, original, and odd.

This phase encourages you to find those rabbit holes, if only for a moment. Begin with the year your focal article was published, where the author wrote it, and begin an online search, paying attention to what was happening in the world that year. Follow your hunches, your interests, and even the ways that what you've found in the other worknet phases maps on to where your meandering is going. Look at Figure 3.4 and you will see five choric nodes. Their selection came from 30 minutes of online searches related to 2011, primarily, and also a few related to Southeast Michigan, Detroit, and Oakland University, the university where Dana Driscoll worked when she wrote the article. Each of the five nodes reflects your choice, something noteworthy or intriguing.

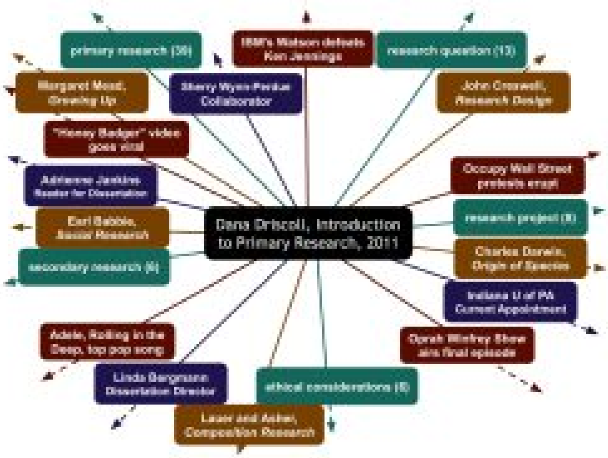

Figure 3.4. A choric worknet (fourth phase), added to Figure 3.3. The center node continues to refer to the article author and brief title. Five radiating nodes refer to events that happened in 2011: "Honey Badger" video goes viral, IBM's Watson defeats Ken Jennings, Occupy Wall Street protests erupt, Oprah Winfrey Show airs final episode, and Adele's "Rolling in the Deep" was the top pop song.

The choices you make in creating the nodes can spark the beginnings of researchable questions and may be reflected in your 300-500 word account of the choric worknet. For example, the node for the "Honey Badger" video going viral as it coincides with Driscoll's article on primary research methods might instigate research questions concerning just what kind of researched claims the video makes, the relationship of video to writing, and the edge of seriousness and playfulness in composing research that will circulate publicly. This element in the choric worknet, although it at first may seem trivial, can also pique curiosity and invite inquiries into what animals know or into their biology and ecology, such as in the *This American Life* podcast episode, "Becoming a Badger." For any student who began reading their focal article with few ideas about their own research path, the choric phase will give you an abundance of options to test and play with the limits and openings of a research project.

Given the messiness of invention—its combinations of purpose and digression, insight and failure, getting lost and then deciding on a direction— the choric worknet stands as the most wide open, potentially the richest of the four phases, even as it risks being the most wasteful, inviting oddball and offbeat ties. Such ties, however, situate the article in the wider world, and they do so while also honoring the place you stand as a researcher, tapping into the interests and curiosities that compel you most.

Try This: Writing about Your Choric Worknet (1-2 hours)

After adding the appropriate nodes to the diagram, in 300-500 words, develop a critical reflection on your selected visual choric worknet, using the following questions to guide you:

- What was happening in the wider world coincident with the time and place of the focal article's being written and published?

- Why have you selected the assortment of nodes you have? How did you find them? What about them compelled you to add them to the worknet?
- Where do you locate possibilities for further exploration and for emerging interests at the juncture of any choric node and any other node in the radial diagram?
- Which of the choric nodes is most relevant, in your view? Which is least?
- Are there choric nodes you thought about including but later abandoned? What motivated you to make such choices?

Branching Out—Taking Worknets Farther

With the four phases completed, as in Figure 3.5, the worknet introduces initial, inventive branchings, a web of filaments, or trails, that invite further inquiry and that may prime further questions. When experienced researchers read scholarly sources, they usually do so to support, reinforce, or clarify claims they have already begun to formulate. In early stages of research, however, reading scholarly sources oftentimes yields more questions, and these questions each set up further inquiry. Worknets position scholarly sources as resources for invention, and after developing all four phases, you will begin to see that you have many more options for expanding your emerging interests than you initially realized. This approach resonates with the idea of **copia**,* or lists of possibilities, which suggests that having more than you need to continue research is a wonderful place to be.

* When we write with copious questions—just as worknets provide—we rarely run out of things to say. Allowing for this wandering helps us think more abundantly about what there is to say on a topic, what is still unknown, and how we can follow the research paths that most ignite our passions.

Figure 3.5. A finalized four-phase worknet. The worknet primes yet more questions from each peripheral node. Each node may prompt associations that motivate database searches, online lookups, or ideas for promising new directions.

While a single worknet can engage us with new ideas entangled in a web of relationships extending from an article, a series of worknets—that is, worknets applied to two or three or more related articles—can form the foundation for a substantial backdrop to a research project. In fact, a compilation of worknets provides you with the basis of a literature review, that portion of a researched project that provides orientation to established research related to your area of inquiry.

Really Getting to Know Your Sources

Worknets provide a stepwise process to get to know your sources. The better known and better read the sources, the more nuanced and precise will be the literature review that emerges from your work with them. Certainly there are other intermediate note-keeping options and less involved approaches to the phases presented in this chapter. For example, an annotated bibliography might require you to gather and write brief summaries of related sources, focusing on the relevance of the source to your research question. Whether you take up the method we introduce and produce a full, complete worknet for one source, or whether you apply selections of the phases to one or more articles, perhaps adapting by writing annotations or sketching worknets by hand, the approach introduced here will help shape your own work.

Try This: Finding Connections, Near and Far (30 minutes)

The choric nodes are the most likely to introduce variety and surprise. They fan out the article's web of relations, finding (possible) connections that may hint at new or slightly altered researchable questions. After you develop the choric phase of the worknet for your chosen article, identify both the node you consider to be *most related* and the node you consider to be *least related*. Write for five minutes on each node, accounting for why you think it to be more or less related. What do each of these nodes indicate about the world from which the article emerged? What do each of these nodes say about what you find interesting or about your own curiosities in this context?

Modeling Worknets

We have seen students do distinctive, innovative work with worknets, and we're spotlighting one such example to give you an idea of what is possible. One undergraduate student at Virginia Tech applied all four phases to a 2015 article by Armond Towns, "That Camera Won't Save You! The Spectacular Consumption of Police Violence." The article discusses issues related to body cameras, social justice, police violence, and the presumed security bestowed on technological devices. In this case, the worknet followed the steps introduced in this article, culminating in all four phases layered into Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6. A sample worknet created by Alonda Johnson.

Additionally, the student was invited to translate the visual and textual worknet into a 3D model, using materials from a local art supply store. The model materialized the worknet as a physical sculpture, conveying more fully an understanding of the article as entangled with the words, sources, relationships, and time-place coincidences of the moment in which it was produced. Figure 3.7 shows the potential of extending the worknet one step farther by creating a model whose dimensions and materials exceed the page or the screen.

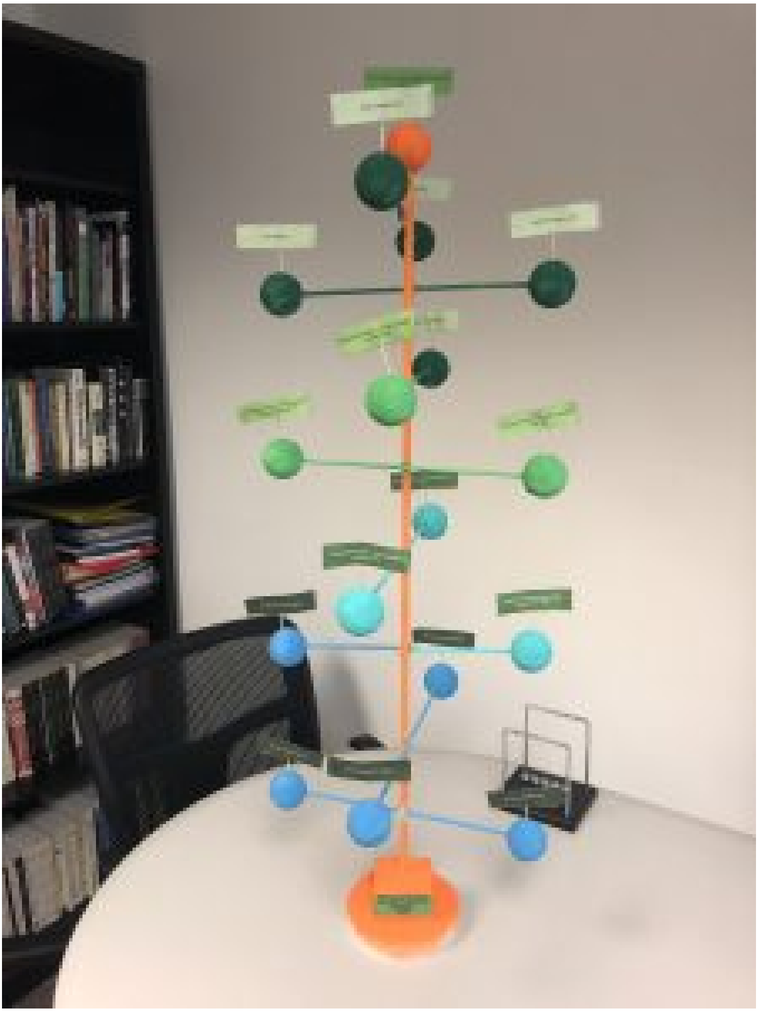

Figure 3.7. A three-dimensional, material model of the sample worknet created by Alonda Johnson.

Using Worknets to Develop a Literature Review

Although literature reviews serve different purposes from discipline to discipline and vary in scope from one project to another, they have in common the purpose of orienting readers to relevant scholarship. Literature reviews provide a synthesis, or glancing overview, that weaves together relevant focuses and acknowledges limitations, or knowledge gaps, in the series of sources gathered in the review. By the time you've finalized a worknet, you will have read and skimmed at least ten sources around a common research theme and question that interests you. Looking again, consider some of the ways specific worknet phases can support your development of a literature review:

- **Semantic worknet** (phase 1): How are specific keywords and phrases used differently from one source to another? How do different keywords and phrases across a selection of sources suggest yet more refined possibilities for impactful terms not yet introduced in the sources gathered?
- **Bibliographic worknet** (phase 2): How do the articles you have collected respond to common sources? What can be said about each article's timeliness based on the ages of the sources it consults?
- **Affinity worknet** (phase 3): How do connections with other people or institutions reveal the priorities of the authors of your sources? What can you discern about the relationship of each article to an academic discipline?
- **Choric worknet** (phase 4): What is the relationship of each article to contemporary

events? How might those events have influenced its message?

With a series of worknets built from different but related sources, you have carried out a generative, robust method for assembling, annotating, and interweaving sources. Literature reviews require thoughtful balancing of sources, making reference to sources so they are represented concisely and fairly. Worknets, for the practice they give you with moving in and out of texts, support the development of effective literature reviews.

Focus on Delivery: Writing a Literature Review

A literature review is a synthesized grouping of academic sources that have been chosen to frame a larger piece of research and that relate to a research question a writer is pursuing. Some literature reviews are stand-alone pieces to say "this is what's out there on a particular topic." Most literature reviews are front matter for larger academic papers. The scope of your project will determine how many sources go into your literature review.

By "literature," we mean academic scholarship chosen about a certain topic that helps to answer a particular research question. By "review," we mean a summary of the literature's argument and an explanation of its connection to the other sources that you use.

To write a literature review, complete these steps:

1. Locate five to ten sources that you think would be useful for understanding the research question.

2. Skim these sources.
3. If the source is relevant to your research question, read it fully and *annotate* it, writing a 100-word summary of the source in your own words. Read the source's bibliography to add relevant sources you find there to your working source list.
4. Discard irrelevant sources and locate ones that are more specific to your research question. Annotate all relevant sources.
5. Read your 100-word summaries and try to figure out how they go together. What are their common features, key words, and theoretical frameworks? What year were they written? Could sources be grouped historically, theoretically, or thematically?
6. Use your worknets to help you group your sources in different ways in order to see patterns between and among your sources:
    - What similar ideas and words are used to discuss major ideas in your research area among your sources? How do they differ? (semantic)
    - What changes when you move your sources into chronological order from earliest to latest or latest to most recent? (bibliographic)
    - What happens when you group sources by relationships between and among

sources? (affinity)

- Would your review benefit from adding historical and cultural context? (choric)
- Consider how these sources together lead up to your research question. Why is it important, timely, and relevant to previous research?
- Revise your annotations and put them together in such a way that the connections between them are clear and the connections to your research question are visible.

What's important for you to know about literature reviews is that the choices about what sources to use and what makes them go together are not immediately clear for a reader, which means part of writing a literature review is including that rationale within the review itself. By reading your literature review, your audience should be able to figure out the "idea glue" that holds all of the literature together, inclusive of your project's purpose and the main conversations taking place within your research area. A reader should walk away from your literature review knowing exactly why you've chosen these sources to go together, as opposed to millions of others that could be chosen instead.

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sourcework, **positivist**, **communities of practice**, **constructivist**, **subjectivities**, **ethos**, **invention**, **delivery**, **semantic phase**, **bibliographic phase**, **affinity phase**, **choric phase**, **uptake**, **peer-reviewed**, **intertextuality**, **ethical treatment**, **proximity**, **beneficence**, **research protocols**, **scripts**

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Derek N. Mueller is Professor of Rhetoric and Writing

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Attributions

26.

KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR SOURCES AND WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

Keeping Track of Your Sources

Through the process of research, it is easy to get lost in a sea of information. Here are some tips and tools that you can use throughout the stages of your research process to keep sources organized.

As you find articles, keep them! Always keep a working digital annotated bibliography of the sources that you are considering or using. If you construct your Works Cited or Reference page as you go along, you will save yourself a lot of time.

Here are some ways that you can store articles that you find:

- Create a Google Doc or a Word file to keep track of the sources that you want to read. Copy and paste the full citation into that document. Or, if you are using a source that you found via an internet search, copy and paste the URL of the source into your document; just remember that if you use it in a paper it will need to be cited properly according to the style you are applying. Note: Many databases, like Academic Search Complete, will create a citation for you; however, you still need to ensure that the citation is correct, according to the style you are applying, before adding it to a final draft Works Cited or Reference page.
- Import sources that you may want to use to a citation management tool like RefWorks or Zotero. They can collect, manage, and organize research documents. Create a RefWorks account for free with your MTSU email address.
- If you are searching in Academic Search Complete, create a "Folder" in Academic Search Complete to save the articles that look interesting.
- Email hyperlinks of web sources to yourself. Note: This often seems like the easiest idea; however, be aware that if you email URLs of

articles to yourself or anyone else those sources will not open if the recipient is not logged in to the database from which the URL was taken. Instead, email the citation to yourself so that you can go back and find the article later.

- If you find an article that you are fairly sure will be useful, go ahead and print it out. You may want to have a folder dedicated to your research project where you keep print outs of all the articles you plan to use. You will end up saving yourself time if you ensure the citation information is on the document before placing it in your folder or adding that citation information to a running document, where you are noting citations, before placing it in the folder.
- Create a digital folder where you store downloaded PDFs or HTML versions of your sources. For this you can create a new folder on your desktop and rename it so that you know it is your research folder. When you find sources, download the PDF or HTML versions and place them in your research folder. But, again, it is best to go ahead and add the citation to your running citation document as you place these downloads into your research folder.

Watch this video to learn how to cite the sources you find through the library.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=139#oembed-1

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotation often offers a summary of a source that you intend to use for a research project, as well as some assessment of the source's relevance to your project or its quality and credibility. It might also include significant textual passages from the source that serve as evidence in that author's argument, or an analysis paragraph.

The key components of a typical annotated bibliography include a citation, a summary, some analysis or listing of evidence employed by the author, and some discussion of how the source is relevant to your own research on a narrowed topic.

Citation for Works Cited or Reference Page

You will provide the full bibliographic citation for the source: author, title, source title, and other required information depending on the type of source and the style you employ. If using MLA style, this information will be formatted just as it would be in a typical Works Cited page.

Summary of the Source

After the citation, you will want to add a summary of the source. The following are tips for creating a summary:

- At the very beginning of your summary, mention the title of the text you are summarizing, the name of the author, and the central point or argument of the text; this is referred to as a "summary signal sentence" and it cues your audience to the fact that they are reading a summary paragraph. Describe the key sections of the text and their corresponding main points. Try to avoid focusing on details. Remember that a summary covers the essential points of an author's argument.
- Use signal phrases to refer to the author(s), in order to ensure you are crediting the author with their argument and not indicating that you have switched to your own argument on the topic.
- Remember that a summary of another author's argument is not the place where you make your own argument. Keep the focus of the summary on the text, not on what you think of it.
- Use the third-person point of view and present tense (i.e. Tompkins asserts… or The author maintains…).
- Try to put as most of the summary as you can in your own words. If you must use exact phrases

from the source that you are summarizing, you must quote and cite them. But do not cite whole passages, as that is not a summary move. Remember that summary is you explaining in your own words what the author's argument is.

Other Required Parts

Check the Annotated Bibliography assignment sheet for additional content requirements. Instructors often require more than a simple summary of each source. For example, you may be asked to explain the relevance of the source for your specific research, or include a list of evidence or analysis from the source. Any (or all) of these things might be required in an annotated bibliography, depending on how or if your instructor has designed this assignment as part of a larger research project. Therefore, before considering each annotation complete, be sure to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you need to go beyond summarizing each source?
- Do you need to evaluate the source's credibility or relevance?
- Do you need to offer an explanation of how you plan to integrate the source in your paper?
- Do you need to point out similarities or differences with other sources in the annotated bibliography?

- Do you need to provide a list of cited textual passages that serve as evidence in the author's argument? Or do you need to write an analysis paragraph?

Formatting

Annotated bibliographies require formatting, which is different depending on what type of style guide you must adhere to: MLA, APA, CMS, or IEEE, for instance. Be sure to check the formatting and style guidelines for your annotated bibliography assignment; this may be most helpful before you begin, as well as in the revision and editing stages, before considering your annotated bibliography project completed.

Links to Examples

The Annotated Bibliography Samples page on the Purdue OWL offers examples of general formatting guidelines for both an MLA and an APA Annotated Bibliography.

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "9.5 Keeping Track of Your Sources and Writing an Annotated Bibliography" by

27.

CONDUCTING YOUR OWN PRIMARY RESEARCH

Melanie Gagich

It is possible that at some point in your college career you will be asked to conduct research yourself, and in that case, this chapter will be very useful. Yet, even if you are not asked to conduct your own research, this chapter provides helpful information to aid you in understanding the primary research created by academics in the social sciences.

Specifically, this section provides you with information pertaining to **research questions, research methods, research instruments, and research article methodology sections in the hopes that it will help you properly read academic research and eventually conduct and/or propose your own study.**

A key fact to keep in mind: methodological choices must align with the research question(s), which informs the type of instruments used.

Research Questions

Research questions guide an academic study. These questions should not be easily answered. For example, the question, “How many people live in the US” is not an appropriate research question because it is easily answered (i.e. you can Google to find the answer) and the answer does not add new knowledge to a field or discipline.

While you might sometimes be asked to write a research question in college writing, these are often questions that will lead you to arguments and evidence that already exist. Ideally, a research question represents a researcher’s attempt to create new knowledge in the field.

Research Methods

The word “research methods” broadly refers to the tools you will use to gather evidence to respond to your research question. There are three types of research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Your choice of research methods depends on your research question and the type of data you need to collect to answer that question.

Qualitative Methods

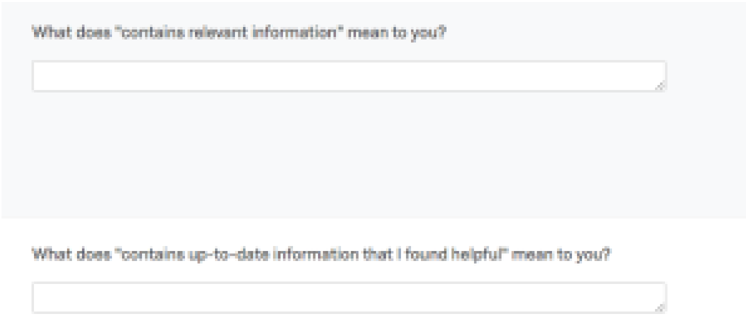
Some research questions focus on language, experiences, observations, and motivations . These types of questions require qualitative methods to answer them, and generate non-numerical data.

Qualitative methods are often used in the following situations:

- You want to study a phenomenon/occurrence in detail. *Example research question*: How does a freshman ENGL 1020 student describe their writing processes?
- You want to focus on individual interpretations/experiences. *Example research question*: What are the experiences of 18-25 year old people using Fitbits for tracking their activity?

To gather qualitative data, researchers often use research interviews, open-ended survey questions, or focus groups. *Example of open-ended survey questions*: What was your experience of transitioning to college writing?

The following is an example of open-ended survey questions as found in a sample survey:


What does "contains relevant information" mean to you?

What does "contains up-to-date information that I found helpful" mean to you?

Figure 1: Example of open-ended survey questions

Quantitative Methods

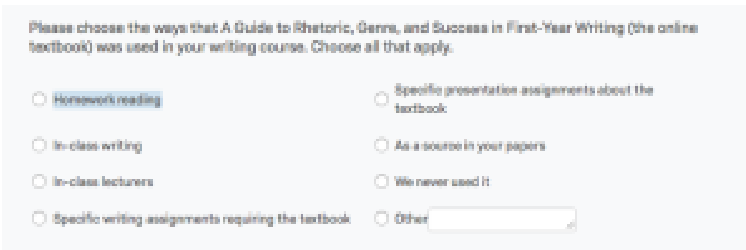
Other research questions focus on quantifying a problem and generating numerical data. These types of research questions require quantitative methods to answer them.

Quantitative methods are often used in the following situations:

- You want to understand the relationship among variables. *Example research question*: identity markers and student major selection
- You want to understand the difference among variables. *Example research question*: What is the difference in career satisfaction between students who major in the humanities versus students who major in business?

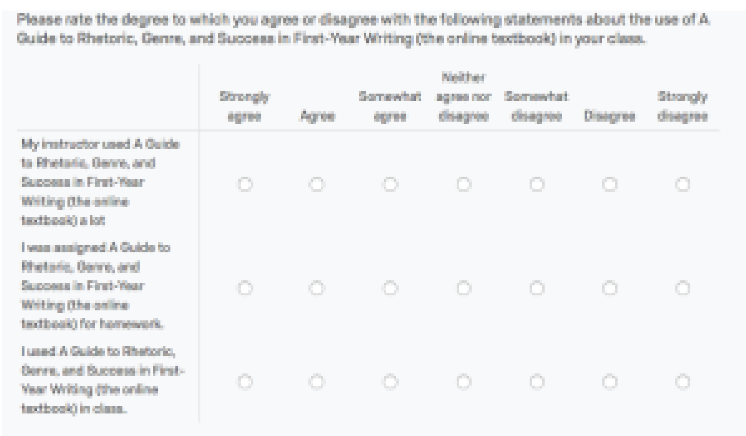
To gather quantitative data, researchers often use surveys that include closed-ended questions and Likert-Scale items.

The following are examples of closed-ended survey questions as found in a sample survey and Likert-Scale survey items found in a sample survey:


Please choose the ways that A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing (the online textbook) was used in your writing course. Choose all that apply.

- Homework reading
- In-class writing
- In-class lecturers
- Specific writing assignments requiring the textbook
- Specific presentation assignments about the textbook
- As a source in your papers
- We never used it
- Other

Figure 2: Example of closed-ended survey questions


Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about the use of A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing (the online textbook) in your class.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My instructor used A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing (the online textbook) a lot							
I was assigned A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing (the online textbook) for homework.							
I used A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing (the online textbook) in class.							

Figure 3: Example of Likert-Scale survey items

Mixed Methods

Sometimes you need to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer a research question. This is known as **mixed methods** and produces numerical and non-numerical data, which can be collected using a variety of research instruments (including those described above).

The Methodology Section in an Academic Research Article

In an empirical research article, there will be a section outlining the methodology for the study that was conducted. Empirical research refers to knowledge that is gained "by means of direct and indirect observation or experience." Including a methodology section in an academic research paper provides the audience with important information needed to understand how the study was conducted, such as the participants and the setting of the study as well as descriptions of data collection and analysis.

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "10.5 Conducting Your Own Primary Research" by Melanie Gagich in A Guide to Rhetoric, Genre, and Success in First-Year Writing and is

28.

ANNOYING WAYS PEOPLE USE SOURCES

Kyle Stedman

Abstract

In “Annoying Ways People Use Sources,” Kyle Stedman identifies common pitfalls writers stumble upon when integrating secondary sources. Stedman uses creative metaphors and imagery to make otherwise dry research conventions more accessible and enjoyable to learn. He writes from the perspective of a reader, likening awkward citations to the frustrations we may feel as we’re driving, watching a movie, or talking to a family member. After describing each common citation pitfall, he recommends a

fix, ultimately drawing our attention to mistakes we might make and options for addressing them.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

How Slow Driving Is Like Sloppy Writing

I hate slow drivers. When I'm driving in the fast lane, maintaining the speed limit exactly, and I find myself behind someone who thinks the fast lane is for people who drive ten miles per hour *below* the speed limit, I get an annoyed feeling in my chest like hot water filling a heavy bucket. I wave my arms around and yell, "What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come *on*!" There are at least two explanations for why some slow drivers fail to move out of the way:

1. They don't know that the generally accepted practice of high- way driving in the U.S. is to move to the right if an upcoming car wants to pass. Or,
2. They know the guidelines but don't care.

But here's the thing: writers can forget that their readers are sometimes just as annoyed at writing that fails to follow conventions as drivers are when stuck behind a car that fails to move over. In other words, there's something similar between these two people: the knowledgeable driver who thinks, "I thought all drivers *knew* that the left lane is for the fastest cars," and the reader who thinks, "I thought all writers *knew* that outside sources should be introduced, punctuated, and cited according to a set of standards."

One day, you may discover that something you've written has just been read by a reader who, unfortunately, was annoyed at some of the ways you integrated sources. She was reading along and then suddenly exclaimed, "What . . . ? But, hey . . . oh come *on*!" If you're lucky, this reader will try to imagine why you typed things the way you did, giving you the benefit of the doubt. But sometimes you'll be slotted into positions that might not really be accurate. When this frustrated reader walks away from your work, trying to figure out, say, why you used so many quotations, or why you kept starting and ending paragraphs with them, she may come to the same conclusions I do about slow drivers:

1. You don't know the generally accepted practices of using sources (especially in academic writing) in the U.S. Or,
2. You know the guidelines but don't care.

And it will be a lot harder for readers to take you seriously if they think you're ignorant or rude.

This judgment, of course, will often be unfair. These readers might completely ignore the merits of your insightful, stylistically beautiful, or revolutionarily important language—just as my anger at another driver makes me fail to admire his custom paint job. But readers and writers don't always see eye to eye on the same text. In fact, some things I write about in this essay will only bother your pickiest readers (some teachers, some editors, some snobby friends), while many other readers might zoom past how you use sources without blinking. But in my experience, I find that teachers do a disservice when we fail to alert students to the kind of things that some readers might be annoyed at—however illogical these things sometimes seem. People are often unreasonably picky, and writers have to deal with that—which they do by trying to anticipate and preemptively fix whatever might annoy a broad range of readers. Plus, the more effectively you anticipate that pickiness, the more likely it is that readers will interpret your quotations and paraphrases in the way you want them to—critically or acceptingly, depending on your writing context.

It helps me to remember that the conventions of writing have a fundamentally *rhetorical* nature. That is, I follow different conventions depending on the purpose and audience of my writing, because I know that I'll come across differently to different people depending on how well I follow the conventions expected in any particular writing space. In a blog, I cite a source by hyperlinking; in an academic essay, I use a parenthetical citation that refers to a list of references at the end of the essay. One of the fundamental ideas of rhetoric is that speakers/writers/composers shape what they say/write/create based on what they want it to do, where they're publishing it, and what they know about their audience/readers. And those decisions include nitty-gritty things like introducing quotations and citing paraphrases clearly: not everyone in the entire world approaches these things the same way, but when I strategically learn the expectations of my U.S. academic audience, what I really want to say comes across smoothly, without little annoying blips in my readers' experience. Notice that I'm not saying that there's a particular *right* or *wrong* way to use conventions in my writing—if the modern U.S. academic system had evolved from a primarily African or Asian or Latin American cultural consciousness instead of a European one, conventions for writing would probably be very different. That's why they're *conventions* and not *rules*.

The Annoyances

Because I'm not here to tell you *rules*, *decrees*, or *laws*, it makes sense to call my classifications *annoyances*. In the examples that follow, I wrote all of the annoying examples myself, but all the examples I use of good writing come from actual student papers in first year composition classes at my university; I have their permission to quote them.

Armadillo Roadkill

> *Armadillo Roadkill: dropping in a quotation without introducing it first.*

Everyone in the car hears it: buh-BUMP. The driver insists to the passengers, "But that armadillo—I didn't see it! It just came out of nowhere!"

Sadly, a poorly introduced quotation can lead readers to a similar exclamation: "It just came out of nowhere!" And though readers probably won't experience the same level of grief and regret when surprised by a quotation as opposed to an armadillo, I submit that there's a kinship between the experiences: both involve a normal, pleasant activity (driving; reading) stopped suddenly short by an unexpected barrier (a sudden armadillo; a sudden quotation).

Here's an example of what I'm talking about:

> We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. "Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support" (Brooks 155). Preparations should be made in the following areas. . . .

Did you notice how the quotation is dropped in without any kind of warning? (Buh-BUMP.)

The Fix: The easiest way to effectively massage in quotations is by purposefully returning to each one in your draft to see if you set the stage for your readers—often, by signaling that a quote is about to come, stating who the quote came from, and showing how your readers should interpret it. In the above example, that could be done by introducing the quotation with something like this (new text bolded):

> We should all be prepared with a backup plan if a zombie invasion occurs. **Max Brooks suggests a number of ways to prepare for zombies' particular traits, though he underestimates the ability of humans to survive in harsh environments. For example, he writes,** "Unlike its human counterparts, an army of zombies is completely independent of support"

> (155). **His shortsightedness could have a number of consequences. . . .**

In this version, I know a quotation is coming ("For example"), I know it's going to be written by Max Brooks, and I know I'm being asked to read the quote rather skeptically ("he underestimates"). The sentence with the quotation itself also now begins with a "tag" that eases us into it ("he writes").

Here's an actual example from Alexsandra. Notice the way she builds up to the quotation and then explains it:

> In the first two paragraphs, the author takes a defensive position when explaining the perception that the public has about scientists by saying that "there is anxiety that scientists lack both wisdom and social responsibility and are so motivated by ambition " and "scientists are repeatedly referred to as 'playing God'" (Wolpert 345). With this last sentence especially, his tone seems to demonstrate how he uses the ethos appeal to initially set a tone of someone that is tired of being misunderstood.

Alexsandra prepares us for the quotation, quotes, and then analyzes it. I love it. This isn't a hard and fast rule—I've seen it broken by the best of writers, I admit—but it's a wise standard to hold yourself to unless you have a reason not to.

Dating Spider-Man

> *Dating Spider-Man: starting or ending a paragraph with a quotation*

An annoyance that's closely connected to Armadillo Roadkill is the tendency writers sometimes have of starting or ending paragraphs with quotations. This isn't technically *wrong*, and there are situations when the effect of surprise is what you're going for. But often, a paragraph-beginning or paragraph-closing quotation feels rushed, unexplained, disjointed.

It's like dating Spider-Man. You're walking along with him and he says something remarkably interesting—but then he tilts his head, hearing something far away, and suddenly shoots a web onto the nearest building and *zooms* away through the air. As if you had just read an interesting quotation dangling at the end of a paragraph, you wanted to hear more of his opinion, but it's too late—he's already moved on. Later, he suddenly jumps off a balcony and is by your side again, and he starts talking about something you don't understand. You're confused because he just dropped in and expected you to understand the context of what was on his mind at that moment, much like when readers step into a paragraph that begins with a quotation. Here's an example:

> *[End of a preceding paragraph:]* . . . Therefore, the evidence clearly suggests that

> we should be exceptionally careful about deciding when and where to rest.
>
> "When taking a nap, always rest your elbow on your desk and keep your arm perpendicular to your desktop" (Piven and Borgenicht 98). After all, consider the following scenario. . . .

There's a perfectly good reason why this feels odd—which should feel familiar after reading about the Armadillo Roadkill annoyance above. When you got to the quotation in the second paragraph, you didn't know what you were supposed to think about it; there was no guidance.

The Fix is the same: in the majority of situations, readers appreciate being guided to and led away from a quotation by the writer doing the quoting. Readers get a sense of pleasure from the safe flow of hearing how to read an upcoming quotation, reading it, and then being told one way to interpret it. Prepare, quote, analyze.

I mentioned above that there can be situations where starting a paragraph with a quotation can have a strong effect. Personally, I usually enjoy this most at the beginning of essays or the beginning of sections—like in this example from the very beginning of Jennifer's essay:

> "Nothing is ever simple: Racism and nobility can exist in the same man, hate and love in the same woman, fear and loyalty,

> compromise and idealism, all the yin-yang dichotomies that make the human species so utterly confounding, yet so utterly fascinating” (Hunter). The hypocrisy and complexity that Stephen Hunter from the *Washington Post* describes is the basis of the movie *Crash* (2004).

Instantly, her quotation hooks me. It doesn’t feel thoughtless, like it would feel if I continued to be whisked to quotations without preparation throughout the essay. But please don’t overdo it; any quotation that opens an essay or section ought to be integrally related to your topic (as is Jennifer’s), not just a cheap gimmick.

Uncle Barry and his Encyclopedia of Useless Information

Uncle Barry and his Encyclopedia of Useless Information: using too many quotations in a row

You probably know someone like this: a person (for me, my Uncle Barry) who constantly tries to impress me with how much he knows about just about everything. I might casually bring up something in the news (“Wow, these health care debates are getting really heated, aren’t they?”) and then find myself barraged by all of Uncle

Barry's ideas on government- sponsored health care—which *then* drifts into a story about how his cousin Maxine died in an underfunded hospice center, which had a parking lot that he could have designed better, which reminds him of how good he is at fixing things, just like the garage door at my parents' house, which probably only needs a little. You get the idea. I might even think to myself, "Wait, I want to know more about that topic, but you're zooming on before you contextualize your information at all."

This is something like reading an essay that relies too much on quotations. Readers get the feeling that they're moving from one quotation to the next without ever quite getting to hear the *real* point of what the author wants to say, never getting any time to form an opinion about the claims. In fact, this often makes it sound as if the author has almost no authority at all. You may have been annoyed by paragraphs like this before:

> Addressing this issue, David M. Potter comments, "Whether Seward meant this literally or not, it was in fact a singularly accurate forecast for territorial Kansas" (199). Of course, Potter's view is contested, even though he claims, "Soon, the Missourians began to perceive the advantages of operating without publicity" (200). Interestingly, "The election was bound to be irregular in any case" (201).

Wait—huh? This author feels like Uncle Barry to me: grabbing right and left for topics (or quotes) in an effort to sound authoritative.

The Fix is to return to each quotation and decide why it's there and then massage it in accordingly. If you just want to use a quote to cite a *fact*, then consider paraphrasing or summarizing the source material (which I find is usually harder than it sounds but is usually worth it for the smoothness my paragraph gains). But if you quoted because you want to draw attention to the source's particular phrasing, or if you want to respond to something you agree with or disagree with in the source, then consider taking the time to surround *each* quotation with guidance to your readers about what you want them to think about that quote.

In the following passage, I think Jessica demonstrates a balance between source and analysis well. Notice that she only uses a single quotation, even though she surely could have chosen more. But instead, Jessica relies on her instincts and remains the primary voice of authority in the passage.

> Robin Toner's article, "Feminist Pitch by a Democrat named Obama," was written a week after the video became public and is partially a response to it. She writes, "The Obama campaign is, in some ways, subtly marketing its candidate as a post-feminist man, a generation beyond the gender

> conflicts of the boomers." Subtly is the key word. Obama is a passive character throughout the video, never directly addressing the camera. Rather, he is shown indirectly through speeches, intimate conversations with supporters and candid interaction with family. This creates a sense of intimacy, which in turn creates a feeling of trust.

Toner's response to the Obama video is like a diving board that Jessica bounces off of before she gets to the really interesting stuff: the pool (her own observations). A bunch of diving boards lined up without a pool (tons of quotes with no analysis) wouldn't please anyone—except maybe Uncle Barry.

Am I in the Right Movie?

> *Am I in the Right Movie? failing to integrate a quotation into the grammar of the preceding sentence*

When reading drafts of my writing, this is a common experience: I start to read a sentence that seems interesting and normal, with everything going just the way I expect it to. But then the unexpected happens: a quotation blurts itself into the sentence in a way that doesn't fit with the grammar that built up to quotation. It feels like sitting in a movie theater, everything going as expected, when suddenly the opening credits start for a movie I didn't plan to see. Here are two examples of what I'm talking about. Read them out loud, and you'll see how suddenly wrong they feel.

1. Therefore, the author warns that a zombie's vision "are no different than those of a normal human" (Brooks 6).
2. Sheila Anne Barry advises that "Have you ever wondered what it's like to walk on a tightrope—many feet up in the air?" (50)

In the first example, the quoter's build-up to the quotation uses a singular subject—*a zombie's vision*—which, when paired with the quotation, is annoyingly matched with the plural verb *are*. It would be much less jolting to write, "a zombie's vision is," which makes the subject and verb agree. In the second example, the quoter builds up to the quotation with a third-person, declarative independent clause: *Sheila Anne Barry advises*. But then the quotation switches into second person—*you*—and unexpectedly asks a question—completely different from the expectation that was built up by the first part of the sentence.

The Fix is usually easy: you read your essay out loud to some- one else, and if you stumble as you enter a quotation, there's prob- ably something you can adjust in your lead-in sentence to make the two fit together well.

Maybe you'll need to choose a different subject to make it fit with the quote's verb (*reader* instead of *readers*; *each* instead of *all*), or maybe you'll have to scrap what you first wrote and start over. On occasion you'll even feel the need to transparently modify the quotation by adding an [s] to one of its verbs, always being certain to use square brackets to show that you adjusted something in the quotation. Maybe you'll even find a way to quote a shorter part of the quotation and squeeze it into the context of a sentence that is mostly your own, a trick that can have a positive effect on readers, who like smooth water slides more than they like bumpy slip-and-slides. Jennifer does this well in the following sentence, for example:

> In *Crash*, no character was allowed to "escape his own hypocrisy" (Muller), and the film itself emphasized that the reason there is so much racial tension among strangers is because of the personal issues one cannot deal with alone.

She saw a phrase that she liked in Muller's article, so she found a way to work it in smoothly, without the need for a major break in her thought. Let's put ourselves in Jennifer's shoes for a moment: it's possible that she started drafting this sentence using the plural subject *characters*, writing "In *Crash*, no characters were allowed" But then, imagine she looked back at the quote from Muller and saw that it said "escape his own hypocrisy," which was a clue that she had to change the first part of her sentence to match the singular construction of the quote.

I Can't Find the Stupid Link

> *I Can't Find the Stupid Link: no connection between the first letter of a parenthetical citation and the first letter of a works cited entry*

You've been in this situation: you're on a website that seems like it might be interesting and you want to learn more about it. But the home page doesn't tell you much, so you look for an "About Us" or "More Information" or "FAQ" link. But no matter where you search—Top of page? Bottom? Left menu?—you can't find the stupid link. This is usually the fault of web designers, who don't always take the time to test their sites as much as they should with actual users. The communication failure here is simple: you're used to finding certain kinds of basic information in the places people usually put it. If it's not there, you're annoyed.

Similarly, a reader might see a citation and have a quick internal question about it: *What journal was this published in? When was it published? Is this an article I could find online to skim myself? This author has a sexy last name—I wonder what his first name is?* Just like when you look for a link to more information, this reader has a simple, quick question that he or she expects to answer easily. And the most basic way for readers to answer those questions (when they're reading a work written in APA or MLA style) is (1) to look at the information in the citation, and (2) skim the references or works cited section alphabetically, looking for the first letter in the citation. There's an assumption that the first letter of a citation will be the letter to look for in the list of works cited.

In short, the following may annoy readers who want to quickly learn more about the citation:

> **[Essay Text:]** A respected guide on the subject suggests, "If possible, always take the high ground and hold it" (*The Zombie Survival Guide* 135).
>
> **[Works Cited Page:]** Brooks, Max. *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead*. New York: Three Rivers, 2003. Print.

The reader may wonder when *The Zombie Survival Guide* was published and flip back to the works cited page, but the parenthetical citation sends her straight to the *Z's* in the works cited list (because initial *A's* and *The's* are ignored when alphabetizing). However, the complete works cited entry is actually with the *B's* (where it belongs).

The Fix is to make sure that the first word of the works cited entry is the word you use in your in-text citation, every time. If the works cited entry starts with Brooks, use (Brooks) in the essay text.

Citations not including last names may seem to complicate this advice, but they all follow the same basic concept. For instance, you might have:

- **A citation that only lists a title.** For instance, your citation might read ("Gray Wolf General

Information"). In this case, the assumption is that the citation can be found under the *G* section of the works cited page. Leah cites her paraphrase of a source with no author in the following way, indicating that I should head to the G's if I want to learn more about her source:

> Alaska is the only refuge that is left for the wolves in the United States, and once that is gone, they will more than likely become extinct in this country ("Gray Wolf General Information").

- **A citation that only lists a page number.** Maybe the citation simply says (25). That implies that somewhere in the surrounding text, the essay writer must have made it stupendously clear what name or title to look up in the works cited list. This happens a lot, since it's common to introduce a quotation by naming the person it came from, in which case it would be repetitive to name that author again in the citation.
- **A quotation without a citation at all.** This happens when you cite a work that is both A) from a web page that doesn't number the pages or paragraphs and B) is named in the text surrounding the quotation. Readers will assume that the author is named nearby. Stephanie wisely leaves off any citation in the example below, where it's already clear that I should head to the *O's* on the works cited page to find

information about this source, a web page written by Opotow:

> To further this point, Opotow notes, "Don't imagine you'll be unscathed by the methods you use. The end may justify the means. . . . But there's a price to pay, and the price does tend to be oneself."

I Swear I Did Some Research

> *I Swear I Did Some Research*: *dropping in a citation without making it clear what information came from that source*

Let's look in depth at this potentially annoying passage from a hypothetical student paper:

> It's possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. If theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (Hawking 51).

In at least two ways, this is stellar material. First, the author is actually voicing a point of view; she sounds knowledgeable, strong. Second, and more to the point of this chapter, the author includes a citation, showing that she knows that ethical citation standards ask authors to cite paraphrases and summaries—not just quotations.

But on the other hand, which of these three sentences, exactly, came from Hawking's book? Did *Hawking* claim that physics experts should join up with folks in other academic disciplines, or is that the student writer? In other words, at which point does the author's point of view meld into material taken specifically from Hawking?

I recognize that there often aren't clean answers to a question like that. What we read and what we know sometimes meld together so unnoticeably that we don't know which ideas and pieces of information are "ours" and which aren't. Discussing "patchwriting," a term used to describe writing that blends words and phrases from sources with words and phrases we came up with ourselves, scholar Rebecca Moore Howard writes, "When I believe I am not patchwriting, I am simply doing it so expertly that the seams are no longer visible—or I am doing it so unwittingly that I cannot cite my sources"

(91). In other words, *all* the moves we make when writing came from somewhere else at some point, whether we realize it or not. Yikes. But remember our main purpose here: to not look annoying when using sources. And most of your instructors aren't going to say, "I understand that I couldn't tell the difference between your ideas and your source's because we quite naturally patchwrite all the time. That's fine with me. Party on!" They're much more likely to imagine that you plopped in a few extra citations as a way of defensively saying, "I swear I did some research! See? Here's a citation right here! Doesn't that prove I worked really hard?"

The Fix: Write the sentences preceding the citation with *specific words and phrases that will tell readers what information came from where*. Like this (bolded words are new):

> It's possible that a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the universe will open new doors of understanding. **I believe that** if theories from sociology, communication, and philosophy joined with physics, the possibilities would be boundless. This would inspire new research, much like **the changes Stephen Hawking describes happening** in the 1970s when scientists changed their focus from

> grand-scale theories of the universe to the small concerns of quantum physics (51).

Perhaps these additions could still use some stylistic editing for wordiness and flow, but the source-related job is done: readers know exactly which claims the essay writer is making and which ones Hawking made in his book. The last sentence and only the last sentence summarizes the ideas Hawking describes on page 51 of his book.

One warning: you'll find that scholars in some disciplines (especially in the sciences and social sciences) use citations in the way I just warned you to avoid. You might see sentences like this one, from page 64 of Glenn Gordon Smith, Ana T. Torres-Ayala, and Allen J. Heindel's article in the *Journal of Distance Education*:

> Some researchers have suggested "curriculum" as a key element in the design of web-based courses (Berge, 1998; Driscoll, 1998; Meyen, Tangen, & Lian, 1999; Wiens & Gunter, 1998).

Whoa—that's a lot of citations. Remember how the writer of my earlier example cited Stephen Hawking because she summarized his ideas? Well, a number of essays describing the results of experiments, like this one, use citations with a different purpose, citing previous studies whose general conclusions support the study described in this new paper, like building blocks. It's like saying to your potentially skeptical readers, "Look, you might be wondering if I'm a quack. But I can prove I'm not! See, all these other people published in similar areas! Are you going to pick fights with all of *them* too?" You might have noticed as well that these citations are in APA format, reflecting the standards of the social sciences journal this passage was published in. Well, in this kind of context APA's requirement to cite the year of a study makes a lot of sense too—after all, the older a study, the less likely it is to still be relevant.

Conclusion: Use Your Turn Signals

You may have guessed the biggest weakness in an essay like this: what's annoying varies from person to person, with some readers happily skimming past awkward introductions to quotations without a blink, while others see a paragraph-opening quotation as something to complain about on Facebook. All I've given you here—all I *can* give you unless I actually get to know you and your various writing contexts—are the basics that will apply in a number of academic writing contexts. Think of these as signals to your readers about your intentions, much as wise drivers rely on their turn signals to communicate their intentions to other drivers. In some cases when driving, signaling is an almost artistic decision, relying on the gut reaction of the driver to interpret what is best in times when the law doesn't mandate use one way or the other. I hope your writing is full of similar signals. Now if I could only convince the guy driving in front of me to use *his* blinker. . . .

Discussion

1. Because so many of these guidelines depend on the writer's purpose, publication space, and audience, it can be difficult to know when to follow them strictly and when to bend them.

What are some specific writing situations where a writer is justified to bend the standards of how to incorporate sources?

2. Choose one of the annoyances. Then, look through a number of different pieces of writing from different genres and collect two examples of writers who followed your chosen guideline perfectly and two who didn't. For each source you found, jot a sentence or two describing the context of that source and why you think its writer did or did not follow the guideline.
3. Rank the annoyances in order of most annoying to least annoying, pretending that you are a college professor. Now, rank them from the point of view of a newspaper editor, a popular blogger, and another college student. What changes did you make in your rankings?

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29.

SYNTHESIS AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

Why do we seek to understand the ways that authors or sources "converse" with one another? So that we can **synthesize** various perspectives on a topic to more deeply understand it.

In academic writing, we synthesize sources to make sense of them as parts of a scholarly "conversation" about a particular topic. This **synthesis** of a "conversation" may become the content of an essay — a paper in which you, the writer, point out various themes or key points from a conversation between several authors who have contributed to one particular topic. This rhetorical move is one that takes place in various **genres**, but especially in **literature reviews**.

Literature reviews—or "lit reviews"—synthesize previous research that has been done on a particular topic, summarizing important works in the history of research on that topic. The literature review provides **context** for the author's own new research. It is the basis and background out of which the author's research grows. Context = credibility in academic writing. When writers are able to produce a literature review, they demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge about how others have already studied and discussed their topic. Literature reviews are often found in the beginning of scholarly journal articles to contextualize the author's own research. Sometimes, literature reviews are done for their own sake, which means some scholarly articles are just literature reviews.

Literature Review Organization

Literature review organization will depend on your focus. The following are the most common organization patterns:

- Topic or Theme, which is good for a synthesis type presentation
- Chronological, which works best when considering how the research topic has been studied and discussed in various time periods (over a year or ten years) and is ideal for a topic that has a long history of research and scholarship
- Discipline or Field, which is best for

interdisciplinary considerations as this arrangement could better offer information about how different academic fields have examined a particular topic.

Attributions

PART IV

RHETORIC AND ARGUMENTATION

The chapters in this section specifically address **rhetoric** and **argumentation**. Understanding **rhetoric** is key to our success as writers, readers, and researchers. Whether or not you can easily define rhetoric, though, you're already using it every day to structure communication and respond to others. Rhetoric is both the study and use of strategic communication—talk and text—in social interaction. As scholar David Bartholomae suggests, we "invent the university" each time we write, and we'd extend this understanding to suggest that we invent our world each day as we read and communicate. As we hope the following section demonstrates, argument is not everything, but it is an important area for research. The word rhetoric is often considered as synonymous with persuasion and argument, but the readings in this section invite us to consider how rhetoric also functions to bring awareness and understanding and how there are limits on argumentation. Rhetorical traditions beyond the western canon help us think broadly about communication and its cultural connections. We hope these ideas build on your existing understanding of rhetoric and argumentation and offer nuance (and not nuisance)!

Below, we provide a brief overview of the focus of each article in this section:

In "Beyond Western Rhetorics," Kate Pantelides addresses the fact that much of our writing practices are influenced by western rhetorical tradition. However, she reminds us of other rhetorical traditions and practices that can be helpful for all of us in expanding our rhetorical tools and awareness. In particular, she briefly introduces the idea of North American Indigenous rhetorics, **cultural rhetorics**, and embodied rhetoric.

In "Defining Rhetoric & Practicing Rhetorical Analysis," Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides provide definitions of rhetoric and rhetorical appeals, as well as offer descriptions and exercises that aid in conducting initial rhetorical analysis. Patricia Roberts-Miller's Bad Idea About Writing: "Rhetoric is Synonymous With Empty Speech" refutes the popular notion that anything referred to as "rhetoric" is ultimately meaningless or meant to be misleading. Instead, she demonstrates an understanding of rhetoric that is central to effective communication.

Nancy Fox draws on ancient texts and contemporary theories of rhetoric to demonstrate the complexity of argumentation in Bad Idea About Writing: "Logos is Synonymous With Logic." She argues that, in order to comprehend the functionality of arguments, a thorough understanding of logos is necessary.

Robin Jeffrey, Emilie Zickel, and Erica Stone explain what the rhetorical situation is in "Understanding the Rhetorical Situation." These authors describe the different components of a rhetorical situation and offer prompts to help better consider each element.

"Using Rhetorical Appeals," by Erica Stone, Melanie Gagich, and Emilie Zickel, is a chapter that explains some basic rhetorical appeals in depth so that they are easy to comprehend and identify when reading and analyzing.

In "Identifying Rhetorical Foundations For Research," Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides discuss the recursive nature of research, how research may vary across disciplines, and the ethical use of research methods, as well as offer some exercises that will aid your understanding of these concepts.

Rebecca Jones discusses the usual blocks to ethical argumentation in Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic? She offers three preferred argumentation models that provide practical methods for recognizing and inventing good arguments: classical rhetoric, Toulmin, and pragmadialectics.

In "Creating Arguments," Melanie Gagich and Emilie Zickel offer discussion and prompts that help better understand features of arguments and what they accomplish.

"Beyond Arguments," by Kate Pantelides, counters the popular belief that all writing is argumentative. Instead, she examines various argumentative and rhetorical forms and traditions that demonstrate how writing can be explicitly invitational, cooperative, and collaborative.

In "On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses", Steven Krause provides an alternate planning exercise: to explore the **antithesis** in your writing projects. His objective is to lead you to test the strength of your argument, which provides a way to generate content and strengthen an argument. This chapter provides strategies for developing counterargument and response.

30.

BEYOND WESTERN RHETORICS

Kate L. Pantelides

Often when we talk about argument, we talk about **evidence**. Good **rhetors** base their arguments on what they learn from asking questions and learning with an open mind, and good arguments are supported with evidence. However, what functions as effective evidence differs across rhetorical traditions. In fact, when it comes to writing, “good,” “bad,” “successful,” and “ineffective” are largely dependent on the particular situation. Instead, it’s useful to think about what is conventional (or expected) in a particular writing situation, what deviates from convention (what is unlike what your audience may have expected), and whether or not that **deviation** works well for the intended purpose.

Arguments that rely primarily on logos, and particularly quantitative evidence, have become largely conventional in Western rhetorical traditions. Of course, this is not the case in all situations, but often, large quantitative data sets are especially persuasive for Western audiences. There are other rhetorical traditions, however, that prioritize other types of evidence and myriad strategies for structuring arguments. We encourage you to seek out and research indigenous and non-western rhetorics, and we note just a few traditions and scholars below that might, we hope, serve as starting points for your inquiry.

North American Indigenous Rhetorics

North American Indigenous rhetorics often consider how multiple stories **constellate**—or meet together to form cultural practices. Phill Bratta and Malea Powell describe this complex understanding of collaborative authoring as follows: "Constellative practice emphasizes the degree to which knowledge is never built by individuals but is, instead, accumulated through collective practices within specific communities. These collective practices, then, are what create the community; they hold the community together over time even when many of them are no longer practiced day-to-day but are, instead, remembered as day-to-day events." Such a perspective acknowledges how authorship is distributed, rather than solely individual. Bratta and Powell, and other scholars of cultural rhetoric, examine how culture is always already rhetorical, and rhetoric is always already cultural. By this they mean that ways of organizing our communication, whether it's written or spoken, is inherently cultural, and these cultural practices are made up by communities rather than individuals. It's complex, but it's worth thinking through because such understanding is central to being a flexible, effective rhetor.

Cultural Rhetorics

The Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa is often credited as a foundational thinker for **Cultural Rhetorics**. You may have read her frequently anthologized "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," which derives from her beautiful book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. The essay begins with an anecdote about her experience at her dentist who attempts to "tame" her wild tongue so that he can work on her teeth. But Anzaldúa expands on this experience, noting her feelings of being caught between Mexican and American language and culture, a feature she ties to the geography of the Mexican-American borders. Anzaldúa theorizes borderlands as important, generative spaces, and she combines history, personal narrative, poetry, and appeals to logos. Her text blends many modes and structures, demonstrating that effective texts may employ multiple forms. Thus, both the method of her text and its content live in the borders between formal and informal, personal and "academic," historical and forward-reaching.

Embodiment

Embodiment—which draws attention to the knowledge we glean from our body, not just the mind—and **Sensorality**—which invites attention to the information we receive with our five senses—is often minimized in Western rhetorical traditions. Instead, the Western rhetorical tradition largely values the mind and, to some extent, asks us to prioritize such learning above the knowledge which we take in from the rest of our body. However, many rhetorical traditions value knowledge gleaned from our body and senses. Sarah Pink describes some of these ideas in her text, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. She draws attention to the information we glean from seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching our environment, and she provides extensive evidence that what we learn from sensing our environment is just as important as what we think about our environment. Interdisciplinary scholar Sarah Ahmed extends this understanding of embodied, sensory knowledge, demonstrating that our identities often impact how both our bodies and our arguments are read. In particular, she describes the relationship between bodies and arguments as such: "some bodies have to push harder than other bodies just to proceed; this argument might be true for arguments as well as bodies" (20).

As you conduct research this semester, consider how you might collect evidence that relies on embodied and sensory experiences rather than purely intellectual ones. What might such evidence look like? What rhetorical traditions might you investigate further to understand where they come from?

A good, perhaps surprising way to start this work is to simply listen. Krista Ratcliffe offers a methodological framework for engaged, active listening, called ***rhetorical***

listening. Ratcliffe suggests that rhetorical listening is a particular method of listening in which the listener is not trying to evaluate whether they agree or disagree with the speaker. Instead, they listen to hear and identify with the speaker. She suggests that listening in this way requires the same strategic, rhetorical efforts as do writing, reading, and speaking. Ratcliffe posits rhetorical listening as a strategy for cross-cultural communication.

31.

DEFINING RHETORIC & PRACTICING RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Jennifer Clary-Lemon; Derek Mueller; and Kate L. Pantelides

Abstract

In this excerpt from *Try This: Research Methods For Writers*, Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides offer different definitions of rhetoric and foundational thinking about argumentation. By offering multiple definitions and methods of analyzing arguments,

they invite readers to pull from their own communication experiences to make sense of how rhetoric functions both at the university and beyond.

Defining Rhetoric

Whereas **discourse analysis** examines patterns, often of language in interaction, and **content analysis** considers quantifiable, systemic patterns in **discourse**, **rhetorical analysis** considers the **context**, **audience**, and **purpose** for discourse. Rhetorical analysis helps demonstrate the significance of a text by carefully considering the **rhetorical situation** in which it develops and the ways that it supports its purpose. There are lots of definitions of rhetoric, and the definition that makes the most sense to you and your understanding of communication will impact how you deploy rhetorical analysis. The following are a few definitions of rhetoric:

- The ancient Greek rhetor, **Aristotle**: "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."
- British rhetorician, **I. A. Richards**: "Rhetoric…should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3).
- Contemporary American rhetors, **Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs**: "Rhetoric is a field of study in which people examine how persuasion and communication work, and it is also the art of human interaction, communication, and

persuasion" (366).

- Contemporary American genre theorist, **Charles Bazerman**:"The study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities. . . . ultimately a practical study offering people greater control over their symbolic activity" (6).

Try This: Defining Rhetoric (30 minutes)

Find a few alternative definitions of rhetoric on your own, and see which one is most appealing to you. Now, mush them together, paraphrase, and come up with a definition that resonates with your understanding of rhetoric.

Practicing Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical analysis helps us understand the various components that make a communicative act/artifact successful or not. A key component to effective rhetorical analysis is careful, active attention to what the author and her text are trying to accomplish. Krista Ratcliffe calls such attention **rhetorical listening**.

Most people summarize rhetorical listening as an orientation of active openness toward communication, and Ratcliffe identifies multiple components for such a stance:

- "acknowledging the existence" of the other, their self, and discourse;
- listening for "(un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns";
- and purposefully "integrating this information into our world views and decision making." (29)

Rhetorical listening often draws our attention to absences. Jacqueline Jones Royster's work on literacy practices, particularly of nineteenth century Black women, demonstrates how listening for and being curious about absences often leads us to understudied **rhetors**. Temptaous McCoy has coined the term amplification rhetorics (AR), a method of seeking out and amplifying rhetorical practices that may not have been effectively heard. She describes AR as a way of examining and celebrating the experiences and community rhetorics of Black and marginalized communities.

Try This: Analyzing Keywords (60 minutes)

Working with something you have recently written, assign keywords (one or two-word phrases) you believe would do well to convey its significance (don't count, just consider what you think is most important about the text). To do so, follow these steps:

- Identify five to seven keywords based on your sense of the text.
- Then, turn to a keyword generating tool, such as TagCrowd (tagcrowd.com) or the NGram Analyzer (guidetodatamining.com/ngramAnalyzer/). Copy and paste your writing into the platform and initiate the analysis with the aid of the keyword generating tool. Which words or phrases match (as in, you thought they were significant and they show up frequently in your text)? Which words or phrases appear in one list but not the other? What do you think explains the differences in the lists?
- Next, identify two keywords or phrases you believe are not sufficiently represented in either list. What are these keywords or phrases, and how are they significant to the work you are doing? Develop a one-page revision memo that accounts for how you could go about expanding the presence of these underrepresented words or

phrases in your writing.

Another way of thinking of rhetorical listening in the context of texts is Peter Elbow's practice of "**The Believing Game**," in which he encourages audience members to suspend potential disbelief or critique of a text. Instead of starting with critique, he works to step into the authors' shoes and actually believe whatever they are suggesting. Complimentary to this practice is Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's formulation of **invitational rhetoric**. They offer invitational rhetoric as counter to understandings of rhetoric as primarily about persuasion, like Aristotle's definition of rhetoric. They see persuasion as ultimately about power, whereas invitational rhetoric instead works to develop equitable relationships. Like rhetorical listening, invitational rhetoric is a method for establishing understanding within relationships. They define such work as "an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and see it as the rhetor does" (5). Although these approaches all differ, what they have in common is using rhetorical awareness to invite understanding rather than arguing for one's own point of view or "winning" an argument.

Try This: Rhetorical Analysis (60 minutes)

Practice rhetorical analysis. Select an article that interests you, perhaps one that you identified to work with in Chapter 3 or something you came across when you searched for potential corpora at the beginning of this chapter. Spend some time considering why this article is persuasive or appealing to you. The following questions may aid your consideration:

- Who is the audience? What evidence suggests this audience?
- What is the context in which it was written? What evidence suggests this?
- What is its purpose? You might also identify the thesis or orienting principle and consider the larger relationship between the work's purpose and its stated argument or principle. What evidence leads you to this finding?
- Who is the author? Really—who is the author? Draw on your worknet findings (see *Try This* for a discussion of worknets) and consider the author's relationship to this rhetorical situation. What is the exigency, or reason, for writing this work? Or, you might return

to considering the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of this article.

There are many ways to practice rhetorical analysis, although it is often reduced to an equation rather than a tool for discovery of a text. Let rhetorical analysis be a method that opens up understanding and possibility rather than one that simply labels certain words or passages. Consider how identifying a particular rhetorical appeal adds depth and nuance to a text and connects you to it in complex ways. For instance, the previous "Try This" offered two approaches to rhetorical analysis. The next "Try This" offers two additional approaches. Consider which one resonates most with you. Which method helps you identify the significance and interest of a text?

Try This: More Rhetorical Analysis (60 minutes)

Working with a text/genre/corpus of your choosing, develop responses to the following prompt. If you seek a text as the basis of your analysis, we recommend Captain Brett Crozier's letter to shipmates aboard the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt during the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak.

In what ways does the author offer specific appeals to the audience? Consider particular instances of the following appeals in the text:

- Kairos, which refers to timeliness—indications of why the text is contemporarily relevant
- Ethos, which generally concerns the relative credibility of an author or argument
- Logos, which means demonstrating specific pieces of evidence that support the text's purpose
- Pathos, which relates to engaging the emotions

Practice rhetorical listening. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is not here? Are there any notable absences? Things/people/ideas the author does not mention?
- Are there ideas or appeals that potentially challenge your acceptance of

the author's work?

Although we have asked you to identify individual appeals, such rhetorical tools usually work together, and it can be hard to pull them apart. In identifying the various rhetorical components of a text, consider how they collaborate to make a text successful and persuasive . . . or not.

Keywords

ethos, pathos, logos, rhetoric, kairos, rhetorical analysis

Author Bios

Jennifer Clary-Lemon is Associate Professor of English at the University of Waterloo. She is the author of *Planting the Anthropocene: Rhetorics of Natureculture, Cross Border Networks in Writing Studies* (with Mueller, Williams, and Phelps), and co-editor of *Decolonial Conversations in Posthuman and New Material Rhetorics* (with Grant) and *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for*

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Derek N. Mueller is Professor of Rhetoric and Writing and Director of the University Writing Program at Virginia Tech. His teaching and research attends to the interplay among writing, rhetorics, and technologies. Mueller regularly teaches courses in visual rhetorics, writing pedagogy, first-year writing, and digital media. He continues to be motivated professionally and intellectually by questions concerning digital writing platforms, networked writing practices, theories of composing, and discipliniographies or field narratives related to writing studies/rhetoric and composition. Along with Andrea Williams, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, and Jen Clary-Lemon, he is co-author of *Cross-Border Networks in Writing Studies* (Inkshed/Parlor, 2017). His 2018 monograph, *Network Sense: Methods for Visualizing a Discipline* (in the WAC Clearinghouse #writing series) argues for thin and distant approaches to discerning disciplinary patterns. His other work has been published in *College Composition and Communication*, *Kairos*, *Enculturation*, *Present Tense*, *Computers and Composition*, *Composition Forum*, and *JAC*.

Kate Lisbeth Pantelides is Professor of English and Senior Provost's Fellow at Middle Tennessee State

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Attributions

32.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "RHETORIC IS JUST EMPTY SPEECH"

Patricia Roberts-Miller

Abstract

Patricia Roberts-Miller's essay "Rhetoric is Synonymous With Empty Speech" is from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing*. Roberts-Miler refutes this popular notion, instead demonstrating the use (and periodic) abuse of rhetoric, an understanding which is central to effective communication. This text is the first chapter of *Bad Ideas About Writing*, and its placement is notable since the association of rhetoric

and empty speech is so pervasive, since it is a prevalent bad idea with broad implications for reading and writing.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

Listen to Kyle Stedman's audio version of this text.

Recently, I was at a meeting of faculty whose research and teaching interests concerned issues of environmentalism. A colleague from another department asked me what my area was. "Environmental rhetoric," I replied. He looked slightly shocked and then commented, "Good environmentalism doesn't have a rhetoric." I'm in a department of rhetoric, so I teach rhetoric, read scholarly pieces on rhetoric, and attend conferences on rhetoric. However, I often forget that other faculty members' views on rhetoric might be different than mine.

A popular view of rhetoric is that it is a straightforward model of how communication should work: A person can speak the truth simply by using words that refer to true things in the world. If she chooses not to use sentences filled with words that refer to true things in the world, then she is engaged in rhetoric. Rhetoric, in this view, is something you add on to sentences (such as metaphor) that decorates and obscures communication. If I say, "The cat is on the mat," I am using language correctly. However, if I say, "The elegant feline languishes mournfully on the expensive carpet, waiting impatiently for what he sees as his lazy servants to open a can of salmon," then I have added rhetoric to the first sentence, or chosen rhetoric over clear communication.

For many people, the simpler, plainer version of the sentence is not just a stylistic choice, it's a moral one. Many people believe that the addition of more complicated words obscures the meaning of the sentence. Rhetoric, to them, is something that hides the truth. If you look at the two sentences, though, you can see that the elaborated, supposedly more rhetorical one communicates quite clearly. In fact, it communicates more effectively and precisely than "The cat is on the mat." It might, of course, be false—there might not be such a cat; it might not be elegant; it might not be thinking much of anything; it might be quite cheerful; it might not like salmon. But the same is true of the simpler sentence—there might not be a cat; it might not be on a mat. Thus, linguistic simplicity and truthfulness aren't necessarily connected, and linguistic complexity and truthfulness aren't necessarily opposed.

Or, to put it another way, for a long time, philosophers of language insisted that language works by sentences having propositional content—"the cat is on the mat"—which can be expressed in various ways. Rhetoric is what we layer onto the proposition. Or, as the old saying goes, "Rhetoric is clothing on the idea." In an Edenic world, we would all wander around naked, and we would all simply and clearly speak our thoughts; rhetoric is something we must have in this fallen world.

People who believe that rhetoric hides meaning believe that we could return to Eden by using simple, plain, and rhetoric-free language. One of several underlying assumptions is that it's harder to lie in plain language, or that lies are more obvious when the language is less complicated. Therefore, we can trust plain language and should treat complicated language with suspicion. Oddly enough, this seemingly straightforward proposition isn't true. In other words, this simple belief shows that an idea can be untrue and persuasive at the same time. It is also interesting that the master deceivers have generally relied on simple, yet false, claims. It's quite likely that people believed their assertions were clear and plain and, therefore, assumed that they must be true.

The Edenic view isn't a helpful way to think about rhetoric. It isn't even how language works. While it's true that the same thing can be said in different ways, there is a way of saying that thing without rhetoric. "The cat is on the mat" is still a style—the simple style—with internal rhyming and prose rhythm. It's also structurally the rhetorical figure of chiasmus—the sentence begins and ends in an almost identical way. We can't get away from rhetoric, but we can choose its kind.

As in all interesting arguments, it's a question of how we're defining terms. And rhetoric has a variety of definitions. It was first used in Platonic dialogues with very little precision. It comes from the Greek word for a person with a certain role in the Athenian Assembly (rhetor). It is believed that it was Plato who added the -ic later.

He used rhetoric in terms of speech-making as opposed to arguing in small groups. Plato wasn't opposed to argumentation, and he wasn't even opposed to some verbal sleight of hand. After all, Socrates—often read as a kind of spokesman for Plato's views— relied heavily on some fairly dodgy logical moves in the dialogues. Plato's point seems to be that speech-making isn't a very useful skill because making speeches to large groups (Athenian juries might have hundreds of people) is not very effective for getting to the truth. It might be effective for getting others to accept the truth one has already figured out (that seems to be the point that Socrates is making in the dialogue *Phaedrus*), but, if you want to find out what's true, argue with another individual. Do not make a speech.

Of course, Socrates makes a lot of speeches in Platonic dialogues. So, it is still murky whether or not Plato noticed the contradiction, was making a different point despite noticing the proposition, or didn't write the dialogues to get to the truth. In fact, Plato's overall attitude toward rhetoric is murky, even though his school, the Academy, did have rhetoric classes. They were taught by a man named Aristotle.

On the other hand, Aristotle, who was a teacher of rhetoric, neither defined rhetoric as style nor as something you add to language. He described it as a discipline and a skill that enables you to see the available means of persuasion. For Aristotle, rhetoric is about public speaking to large groups, and it is different from philosophy. So, he did share those two assumptions with Plato. But he didn't agree with Plato about rhetoric not getting us to the truth. He thought that it could get us to the truth, but that it could also be used to deceive. It depends on the motives of the person using it.

Aristotle loved syllogisms, and seems to have believed that all reasoning could be done through them. In philosophy, to get to the truth, you try to begin with a universally valid major premise (e.g., all men are mortal). Then you have a more specific proposition related to that premise (e.g., Socrates is a man) that enables you to draw a conclusion (e.g., Socrates is mortal). But Aristotle said that this kind of reasoning doesn't work in large assemblies for two reasons. First, during a speech, people don't have the time to reason from universally valid major premises—if you're arguing about whether Philip of Macedon represents a threat, it's useless to try to find universally valid premises about tyrants or war or people from Macedon. You don't have time. Second, the kind of things about which we make speeches—politics, ethics, military strategy, guilt or innocence, honor and dishonor—aren't subject to certainty. There are no universally valid major premises about tyrants that will help us figure out what we need to do now and here to assess Philip. We must rely on what is probably true.

According to Aristotle, what you learn from rhetoric is how to approach political, ethical, and legal problems, how to come up with an argument when you can't be (or, at least, shouldn't be) certain that you're right. You also learn how to assess other people's arguments. Aristotle, unlike many other philosophers, doesn't present rhetoric as an inferior discipline to philosophy (he says it's a "counterpart"). It's just different. It's a pragmatic skill that helps us in decision-making.

Aristotle, being an astute observer, noticed that people argued about different things in similar ways. He came up with 28 approaches, called "lines of argument" (they're also sometimes called "formal topoi," which makes it seem as though they have long dresses and white ties). If I am making a speech trying to persuade people to become more active in politics, I might argue from precedent (listed as #11 of his 28 lines), or argue that the consequences of political activism are good (#13), or point out inconsistencies in the argument for political quietism (#22), and so on. Those different lines aren't ornaments I hang on the proposition that people should be politically active; they are all different ways of thinking about the situation.

Take, for instance, Aristotle's first line of argument: consideration of the opposite, a strategy that might structure my entire case. I might spend all my time trying to show that political activism is good because political quietism is bad. I might, however, make that just part of one speech, in which I move from how good it is to be politically active to a moving description of the tragedies associated with political quietism. Or, I might make it one para-graph, or one sentence. I might say, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." In other words, the forms—such as consideration of the opposite—can be used to structure a clause, sentence, paragraph, speech, or (in John F. Kennedy's case) political philosophy. Rhetoric is a way of thinking. It is not just something added to a thought derived by other means. Does that mean that rhetoric is always good? Of course not.

Rhetoric is a contingent, pragmatic, and generally (but not always) verbal way of approaching problems we face as members of communities. It is the cause as well as the consequence of thought. If we tend to think in binaries and divide everything into this versus that, then we'll probably be drawn to the rhetorical figures that divide things into two. Continually presenting and interpreting issues in that divided way will reinforce our sense that things really are divided into two. We might then act in ways that divide things into two—we might believe that everyone is either an ally or an enemy, and thereby alienate neutral parties. Thinking and talking about everyone as ally or enemy might mean we are likely to end up in a world in which people end up treating us in that manner. Rhetoric isn't always good, and it isn't always bad, but it's rarely neutral.

For instance, we might be tempted to use metaphors of disease, infection, or contamination for those groups that we don't like. That might be a calculated decision to mislead an audience. We might not dislike the groups as vehemently as we project but we still perform for the audience to get votes, money, popularity, sales, sex, or something else. It is insincere. These types of people might make us feel unsettled and disgusted. They might even come across to us as dangerous. Thus, we call them slimy or a cancer on the body politic. We proclaim that they spread ideas, weaken our community, and threaten our children. Those metaphors and that rhetoric would feel accurate, and it would convey our meaning—it is not added on; it is not ornamentation. It is what we mean. And it can hurt us as a community because it can mean that we then interpret that group's actions through a lens of disease, threat, and danger. We can end up killing them or getting them killed because of the rhetoric we used. We can't get away from rhetoric, but we can choose the kind of rhetoric we use.

Further Reading

For further reading on rhetoric as more than "mere rhetoric," see especially Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Rhetoric*, which distinguishes between "rhetrickery" and rhetoric as an inclusive method of deliberation. Eugene Garver's *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* is an elegant introduction to Aristotle, and Debra Hawhee and Sharon Crowley's *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, though a textbook, explains classical and current conceptions of rhetoric usefully.

Keywords

conceptual metaphor, **deliberative rhetoric**, public argumentation, **rhetorical topoi**

Author Bio

Patricia Roberts-Miller is a professor in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Texas at Austin, where she also directs the writing center. Her scholarly and teaching interests include the history and theory of public argumentation. As she likes to put it, she's a "scholar of train wrecks in public deliberation." More about Trish can be found at patriciarobertsmiller.com.

Attributions

33.

BAD IDEA ABOUT WRITING: "LOGOS IS SYNONYMOUS WITH LOGIC"

Nancy Fox

Abstract

Nancy Fox's essay "Logos is Synonymous With Logic" is from the book *Bad Ideas About Writing*. In it she complicates this "bad idea" about logic, drawing on ancient texts and contemporary understandings of rhetoric to demonstrate the complexity of argumentation. She

suggests that a nuanced view of logos is actually more useful for our understanding of how arguments function.

This reading is available below and as a PDF

Logos. *Ethos*. *Pathos*. The three basic rhetorical appeals. Surely Aristotle laid them down for all writers over 2,300 years ago, right? In his text, *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle presents logos as argument itself, aligned with ethos, the appeal of a speaker's character, and pathos, the appeal to audience attitude or feeling. Together, these appeals infuse an argument with its persuasive power. However, an often simplistic, formulaic, and transactional use of these complex terms detaches them from their potential meaning. Such is the persistent problem, or bad idea, about logos.

Logos, the "argument itself" according to Aristotle, consists of material such as data and narrative, as well as the cogent reasoning that allows us to make sense of our stories. However, through careless practice, mistranslation, or misconception of the word's origins, logos is often defined simply as logic. Logic, in Aristotle's terms, is a tool for scientific calculation and investigation. Aristotle is considered the father of logic because he invented a structure called the *syllogism*, exemplified by the famous statement: "Socrates is a man. All men are mortal. Therefore, Socrates is mortal." The first two assertions—"Socrates is a man. All men are mortal"—are premises that lead "of necessity," in Aristotle's terms, to the only conclusion: "Socrates (a man) is therefore mortal."

But logic that serves scientific investigation is a different strategy from the logos appeal of rhetorical argument and storytelling. Logos is grounded in audience and situation—not scientific deduction. In fact, the ancient Greeks had a variety of definitions for logos, including computation and exposition, as well as forms of verbal expression, such as oratory and poetry, that represent an expansive and faceted story. None of these definitions were so reductive as merely logic. It is confusing, then, that the entry on logos in the Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition opens with the words "logical appeal," which also appear consistently in many other canonical works in the field, not to mention in textbooks that translate scholarly concepts for students. Logos is commonly defined as a set of logical (and therefore inevitable) conclusions drawn from assertions or claims, such as the syllogism.

Audiences and particular rhetorical situations may require logical reasoning and even syllogisms, but situations are rarely completely encompassed within one form of reasoning or arguing. Perhaps the best example would be a court case, in which syllogistic arguments, narrative appeals, and community values intertwine. The case is not fully explicable or approachable through one kind of proof. Writers are not constrained by formal and limiting systems like logic, which are highly useful for some circumstances, but irrelevant or even inappropriate to others, including the kinds of writing situations in which students often find themselves. Students are often challenged to understand and make arguments about political, social, artistic, policy, or cultural topics that cannot be demonstrated or logically proven.

All sources that dispute the logic-only definition speak of logos as complex, a bit mysterious, and resistant to easy analysis. It's true that Aristotle defined logos as "the argument … (and) proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself." However, textual evidence of logos existed centuries before the systematizing hand of Aristotle traced the strands of rhetorical proofs through logos, ethos, and pathos in 350 BCE. Ancient texts reveal competing perspectives of logos, from spiritual to structural. The Online Writing Lab (OWL) of Purdue University gathers these disparate views in one succinct statement that poses and resolves the problem of this potent word: "Logos is frequently translated as some variation of 'logic or reasoning,' but it originally referred to the actual content of a speech and how it was organized."

Teaching logos as logic in rhetorical arguments sets students up for confusion. They may study the myriad ways we build arguments, from articles to films, stories, songs, and marketing or political campaigns. Yet when asked to analyze arguments and make their own, students are often ill-served by a hunt for logical entailments among situated arguments about issues for which there is no one, entailed, necessary answer to be demonstrated. Recognizing logic's innate limitations to encompass all that logos is and can be, some folks in computer programming and the writing world itself propose such hybrid terms as *fuzzy logic* and *informal logic* to resolve this issue. They open the term logic itself to less predictable—and more human—ways of thinking and speaking about ourselves. In a closely related issue, beyond the reach of this chapter but worthy of further investigation, an appreciation of the true meaning of logos can allay concern that digital landscapes are distorting our interactions and relationships. It's the reduction of our human communication to logical systems based on algorithms that logos, our robust language story, can redress, enliven, and enlighten.

Further Reading

The primary texts collected in *Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present,* edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Bedford Books), trace the use of the term logos through time and cultural development of rhetorical practices. But the origins of the word logos can be discovered in the earliest texts by Heraclitus, "Concerning the Logos," which describes the sacred nature of logos, and Aristotle's *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, the source for a practical understanding of logos as it informs our daily communications with one another.

Scholars who trace the various strands of logos—spiritual and practical—in the context and texture of ancient Greek culture include Debra Hawhee and Sharon Crowley in *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* (Allyn and Bacon); Susan Jarratt in her foundational *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Southern Illinois University Press); and Jeffrey Walker, who investigates the deeper sources of logos in human communication, beneath strategy, in *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford University Press).

Print and online sources that offer a fast but effective consultation about logos, its history, and its current practice, are the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, edited by Theresa Enos (Garland); *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*, by James Jasinski (Sage); *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, by Richard A. Lanham (University of California Press); and "Logos" in the websites, *Silvae Rhetoricae* and Purdue OWL.

Keywords

logic, logos, persuasive discourse, philosophy, rhetoric, rhetorical theory

Author Bio

Nancy Fox is a faculty member in the English department at the University of West Florida and a doctoral candidate in English language and rhetoric at the University of Washington, Seattle. She has published poetry, essays, and a children's book, as well as work in feminist studies, multimedia, and writing. Her subjects have ranged from analysis of the film *The Kids Are All Right* and Andy Warhol's *Dream America* to a new discovery in "The Mouse's Tale" from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. She lives on the Gulf Coast with her spouse and two children.

Attributions

34.

UNDERSTANDING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Robin Jeffrey; Emilie Zickel; and Erica M. Stone

A key component of **rhetorical analysis** involves thinking carefully about the "**rhetorical situation**" of a text. You can think of the rhetorical situation as the **context** or set of circumstances out of which a text arises. Any time anyone is trying to make an **argument**, one is doing so out of a particular context, one that influences and shapes the argument that is made. When we do a rhetorical analysis, we look carefully at how the rhetorical situation (context) shapes the rhetorical act (the text).

We can understand the concept of a rhetorical situation if we examine it piece by piece, by looking carefully at the rhetorical concepts from which it is built. The philosopher Aristotle organized these concepts as **author**, **audience**,

setting, **purpose**, and **text**. Answering the questions about these rhetorical concepts below will give you a good sense of your text's rhetorical situation: the starting point for rhetorical analysis.

Author

The "authors" of a text are the creators—the people who are communicating in order to try to effect a change in their audience. Of course, an author doesn't have to be a single person or a person at all; an author could be an organization. To understand the rhetorical situation of a text, one must examine the identity of authors and their background. The following questions may aid your understanding of the author(s):

- What kind of experience or authority does the author have in the subject being addressed?
- What values does the author hold, either in general or with regard to this particular subject?
- How invested is the author in the topic of the text? In other words, what affects the author's perspective on the topic?

Audience

In any text, an author is attempting to engage an audience. Before we can analyze how effectively an author engages an audience, we must spend some time thinking about that audience. An audience is any person or group who is the intended recipient of the text and also the person/people the author is trying to influence. To understand the rhetorical situation of a text, one must examine who the intended audience is by thinking about certain things. The following questions will prompt you to consider relevant information about audience:

- Who is the author addressing? Sometimes this is the hardest question of all. We can sometimes get this information by looking at where an article is published. Often, you can research the newspaper, magazine, website, or journal title where the text is published to get a good sense of who reads that publication. Or you might consider the references that the author makes.
- What is the demographic of the intended audience? Demographics can include age, gender, race, socio-economic status, religious or political beliefs.
- What are the backgrounds, values, interests of the intended audiences?
- How open is this intended audience to the author?
- What assumptions might the audience make about the author?
- In what context is the audience receiving the text?

Setting

Nothing happens in a vacuum, and that includes the creation of any text. Essays, speeches, photos, political ads, or any other type of text were written in a specific time and/or place, all of which can affect the way the text communicates its message. To understand the rhetorical situation of a text, we can identify the particular occasion or event—exigence—that prompted the text's creation at the particular time it was created. The following questions will help you to do that:

- Was there a debate about the topic that the author of the text addresses? If so, what are (or were) the various perspectives within that debate?
- Did something specific occur that motivated the author to speak out?

Purpose

The purpose of a text blends the author with the setting and the audience. Looking at a text's purpose means looking at the author's motivations for creating it. The author has decided to start a conversation or join one that is already underway. Why has the author decided to join in? In any text, the author may be trying to inform, to convince, to define, to announce, or to activate. Can you tell which one of those general purposes your author has? Use the following questions as prompts when trying to determine purpose:

- What is the author hoping to achieve with this text?
- Why did the author decide to join the "conversation" about the topic?
- What does the author want from their audience? What does the author want the audience to do once the text is communicated?

Text

Use the following prompts to help you better understand the text itself:

- In what **format** is the text being made, or through which **medium** is it being delivered?
- Is it an image, written essay, speech, song, protest sign, meme, or sculpture?
- What is gained by having a text composed in a particular format/medium?
- What limitations does that format/medium have?
- What affordances or opportunities for expression does that format/medium have (that perhaps other formats do not have?)

Attributions

35.

USING RHETORICAL APPEALS

Erica M. Stone; Melanie Gagich; and Emilie Zickel

Rhetoric, as the previous chapters have discussed, is the way that rhetors/authors/writers/composers use language in order to communicate with an audience. Once we understand the **rhetorical situation** out of which a text is created (why it was written, for whom it was written, by whom it was written, how the medium in which it was written creates certain constraints, or perhaps freedoms of expression), we can look at how all of those contextual elements shape the author's creation of the text.

Classical rhetorical appeals are one way of examining the ways that rhetors, or authors, craft arguments to appeal in particular ways to their audiences. Below we address three common rhetorical appeals—also known as

The Aristotelian Appeals: **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**. We offer a brief overview here, but it's worth spending more time understanding the nuances of rhetorical appeals.

One other classical rhetorical concept to keep in mind as you consider appeals is **kairos**, or timeliness. The Ancient Greek word for time itself is **chronos**. Kairos is something different (and perhaps much cooler). Kairos is about the timeliness of an argument. We often think about timeliness when we're designing arguments in our everyday lives. If I was going to ask a friend or family member for a favor, I might do it after I have done something they've asked of me. At the least, I wouldn't ask my friend to wash the dinner dishes for me if I'm sitting with my feet on the couch, unless I was very ill. Outdoor entertainment is often timed such that it happens when the sun is going down and the light is particularly beautiful. As you read about ethos, pathos, and logos below, think about how kairos is also operating at all times to make these particular appeals more or less successful.

Rhetorical Appeals

Rhetorical appeals refer to ethos, pathos, and logos. These are classical Greek terms, dating back to Aristotle, who is traditionally seen as "the father of rhetoric." To be rhetorically effective (and thus persuasive), an author must engage the audience in a variety of compelling ways, which involves carefully choosing how to craft an argument so that the outcome, audience agreement with the argument or point, is achieved. Aristotle defined these modes of engagement and gave them the terms that we still use today: logos, pathos, and ethos.

Defining Logos, Pathos, & Ethos

Logos: Appeal to Logic

Logic. Reason. Rationality. Logos is brainy and intellectual, cool, calm, collected, objective.

When authors rely on logos, it means that they are using logic, careful structure, and objective evidence to appeal to the audience. An author can appeal to an audience's intellect by using information that can be fact-checked using multiple sources) and thorough explanations to support key points. Additionally, providing a solid and non-biased explanation of one's argument is a great way for an author to invoke logos.

For example, if I were trying to convince my students to complete their homework, I might explain that I understand everyone is busy and they have other classes (non-biased), but the homework will help them get a better grade on their test (explanation). I could add to this explanation by providing statistics showing the number of students who failed and didn't complete their homework versus the number of students who passed and did complete their homework (factual evidence).

Logical appeals rest on rational modes of thinking, such as those listed below:

- Comparison: a comparison between one thing and another, similar thing to help support your claim (It is important that the comparison is fair and valid, and the things being compared must share significant traits of similarity.)

- Cause/effect thinking: you argue that X has caused Y, or that X is likely to cause Y to help support your claim (Be careful with the latter; it can be difficult to predict that something "will" happen in the future.)
- Deductive reasoning: starting with a broad, general claim/example and using it to support a more specific point or claim
- Inductive reasoning: using several specific examples or cases to make a broad generalization
- Exemplification: use of many examples or a variety of evidence to support a single point
- Elaboration: moving beyond just including a fact, but explaining the significance or relevance of that fact
- Coherent thought: maintaining a well-organized line of reasoning; not repeating ideas or jumping around

Pathos: Appeal to Emotions

When authors rely on pathos, it means that they are trying to tap into the audience's emotions to get them to agree with the stated claim. This could involve making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the person/group/event being discussed, or perhaps connection to or rejection of the person/group/event being discussed. An author using pathetic appeals wants the audience to feel something: anger, pride, joy, rage, or happiness. For example, many of us have seen the ASPCA commercials that use photographs of injured puppies, or sad-looking kittens, and slow, depressing music to emotionally persuade their audience to donate money.

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to "open up" to the topic, the argument, or to the author. Emotions can make us vulnerable, and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that their argument is a compelling one. Good questions to ask when analyzing for pathos are provided below:

- What is the author trying to make the audience feel?
- How is the author doing that?

Pathetic appeals might include any of the following:

- expressive descriptions of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- vivid imagery of people, places or events that help readers feel like they are seeing those events
- sharing personal stories that make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the person

being described

- using emotion-laden vocabulary as a way to put the reader into that specific emotional mindset
- using any information that will evoke an emotional response from the audience

When reading a text, try to locate when the author is trying to convince the reader using emotions because, if used to excess, pathetic appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience.

Ethos: Appeal to Values/Trust

Ethical appeals have two facets: audience values and authorial credibility/character.

On the one hand, when authors make ethical appeals, they are attempting to tap into the values or ideologies that the audience holds; some examples of these values or ideologies are patriotism, tradition, justice, equality, dignity for all humankind, and self-preservation, or other specific social, religious, or philosophical values. These values can sometimes feel very close to emotions, but they are felt on a social level rather than only on a personal level. When authors evoke the values that the audience cares about as a way to justify or support their argument, we classify that as ethos. The audience will feel that the author is making an argument that is “right”�in the sense of “moral rightness”; for example, the author may be thinking “My argument rests upon those values that matter to you. Therefore, you should accept my argument." This first part of the definition of ethos, then, is focused on the audience's values.

On the other hand, this sense of referencing what is "right" in an ethical appeal connects to the other sense of ethos: the author. Ethos that is centered on the author revolves around two concepts: the credibility of authors and their character.

Credibility of authors is determined by their knowledge and expertise on the subject at hand. For example, if you are learning about Einstein's Theory of Relativity, would you rather learn from a professor of physics or a cousin who took two science classes in high school thirty years ago? It is fair to say that, in general, the professor of physics would have more credibility to discuss the topic of physics. To establish credibility, authors may draw attention in the text to who they are or what kinds of experience they have with the topic being discussed; this is an ethical appeal. On the other hand, some authors do not have to establish their credibility because the audience already knows who they are and that they are credible.

Character is another aspect of ethos, and it is different from credibility because it involves personal history and even personality traits. A person can be credible but lack character or vice versa. For example, in politics, sometimes the most experienced candidates�those who might be the most credible candidates�fail to win elections because voters do not accept their character. Politicians take pains to shape their character as leaders who have the interests of the voters at heart. The candidates who successfully prove to voters (the audience) that they have the type of character that can be trusted are more likely to win.

Thus, ethos comes down to trust. How can authors get the audience to trust them? How can the author make themself appear as a credible speaker who embodies the character traits that the audience values?

In building ethical appeals, we see authors do one or more of the following:

- referring either directly or indirectly to the values that matter to the intended audience (so that the audience will trust the speaker)
- using language, phrasing, imagery, or other writing styles common to people who hold those values, thereby "talking the talk" of people with those values (again, so that the audience is inclined to trust the speaker)
- referring to their experience and/or authority with the topic (and therefore demonstrating their credibility)
- referring to their own character, or making an effort to build their character in the text

When reading, you should always think about author credibility regarding the subject as well as their character. When analyzing, you should consider how an author is directly or indirectly establishing ethos.

Attributions

36.

RHETORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Jennifer Clary-Lemon; Derek Mueller; and Kate L. Pantelides

Abstract

This chapter is an excerpt from *Try This: Research Methods For Writers*, by Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate Pantelides. The authors recommend an orientation toward writing and research grounded in questioning and curiosity. They include some invention

activities intended to help writers engage with research as well as some examples of student research projects.

Uncertainty and Curiosity

Research does not start with a thesis statement. It starts with a question. And though research is **recursive**, which means that you will move back and forth between various stages in your research and writing process, developing an effective question might in itself be the most important part of the research process. Because there's really no point in doing a research project if you already know the answer. That is boring. But it is how we are often taught to do research: we decide what we're going to argue, we look for those things that support that argument, and then we write up the thing that we knew from the outset. If that sounds familiar, we suggest that you scrap that plan.

Instead, we suggest approaching research with an orientation of openness, ready and willing to be surprised, to change your mind. Of course, you never approach research in a vacuum. You probably have ideas about whatever it is that you're working on. You probably have thoughts about what the answers are to your research questions, and that is as it should be, but that statement of belief should not be where you start.

Try This: Consider Everyday Contexts You Have Engaged in Research (15 minutes)

Take a moment to think about the many occasions when you have gathered information to answer a question outside of an academic context (i.e., What is the most effective deodorant? Where is the best place to eat? What is the fastest route home?). Follow the steps listed:

- First, make a list of some of these everyday questions you have identified and the answers you have come up with in your research.
- Select one that is still interesting to you—one that you may have answered but suspect there are more answers to or one that the answer you identified was only partial.
- Note the method or tool you selected to answer the question.
- Make a list of other methods you might employ to answer your original question.
- Reflect on how identifying alternative research methods might lead you to different answers to your original question, then make a new research

plan.

We hope you cultivate an exploratory motive, an orientation of openness, and a willingness to learn. Adopting such a disposition is your work. Get ready to find data that conflicts with what you have come to know about a particular issue. You might even think about your thesis statement as the last thing that you develop in your research project. Let curiosity drive you forward in your work. Research is really only worth engaging in if you learn something from it. We often think about research as knowing, but it's really about the making of knowledge(s), the movement from not knowing to beginning to know, figuring things out, trying to solve or sort out tricky problems. At the end of an effective research project, we usually have more questions than we started with. Sure, we answer the initial question (if all goes well), but that process of building knowledge usually leads to more questions and helps us recognize what we don't know. Developing a research orientation includes seeing the world around you as abundant with research opportunities. Harness your curiosity, embrace uncertainty, and begin looking for researchable questions.

Try This: Make a List of Curios (30 minutes)

Reflect on times that you've gotten wrapped up in something—when you looked away from the clock and suddenly two hours had passed. What were you doing? Cooking, reading, engaging in a good conversation, playing a game, watching tv, hiking? Identify that experience and consider the following questions:

- What was it that made time fly?
- How might you capture that energy in a research experience?

Now make a curio cabinet of sorts. A curio is a special, mysterious object that inspires curiosity. Cabinets of curiosities were popularized in Europe in the late sixteenth century. They featured items from abroad and unique artifacts from the natural world. Such spaces allowed collectors to assemble and display collections that catalogued their interests and travels and that inspired awe in their reception. Create a curio cabinet for yourself, either by assembling a collection of artifacts that describe your interests, composing an image that represents your curiosities, or developing a textual representation of questions that interest you.

No matter where your research and writing take you—in terms of major, interest, or profession—it's useful to consistently reflect on what, why, and how you're conducting research at each step in the process. This attention to thinking about your thinking is called **metacognition**. This process may sound exhausting, and it can be, especially at first, but being metacognitive about your research will help you **transfer** your learning into new contexts. Having this orientation toward your research ensures that you have **intention** in each step you take. The more you practice this approach to research, the easier it gets so that it eventually becomes instinctual.

Rhetorical Foundations of Research

What we have described thus far is a **rhetorical approach** to the research process. Derived from classical Greek influences, the five ancient **canons** of rhetoric include **invention**, **arrangement**, **style**, **memory**, and **delivery**. In the context of writing and research, these long established, foundational concepts also go by other names, such as pre-writing, organization, mechanics and grammar, process, and circulation of a research product. We want to keep in mind these qualities of effective communication throughout the chapter, but we'll spend significant time with invention and delivery—canons that we think often get pushed aside or treated as afterthoughts in many approaches to research and research-based writing and that we pay particular attention to in this text.

As you familiarize yourself with an issue and the way scholars have talked about it, take note of the specific ways they talk about the issue and consider why that is. This is how you develop a rhetorical awareness of the ways in which research is constructed. So when you read, read like a researcher: consider both what is said about an issue and how it is said. Identify the rhetorical situation of the piece of writing; this includes the **context** in which it is written, the **audience** for whom it is written, and its **purpose**.

We begin here with a research proposal, but throughout this book we also highlight other research genres that may be more or less familiar to you: literature reviews, coding schemas, annotated maps, research memos, slide decks, and posters. Each time you encounter a new genre, we encourage you to place it in its communicative context: What is the reason to compose this way? What need does it fulfill for its audience? What situation is it most suited to? What communication problem does it solve? We hope that working through research genres in this way will also help you understand your own research process more fully.

Try This: Go on a Scavenger Hunt to Identify Genres in "The Wild" (30 minutes)

With a partner or two, walk around identifying, photographing, documenting, and analyzing genres in your midst. If you're at a university, you might see posters, signs, and bulletin boards. If you're at home, you'll see different genres, and if you're at a coffee shop, you'll see yet another set of genres.

Consider this: one genre found in a coffee shop is a menu. It might be on a board, or there may be paper menus that each customer can pick up, but this genre is reliably found in coffee shops throughout the US. Wherever you are, be attentive to the genres that surround you by doing the following:

1. Make a list of the genres (the kind of texts) that make up your immediate environment.
2. Choose one genre that interests you and consider its rhetorical situation: What is the context in which it is written? Who is its audience? What is the genre's purpose?
3. More broadly, consider the genre's communicative context: How is this particular example of the genre composed? What communication problem does it solve?

How might such rhetorical knowledge about genre impact your approach to matching research questions to methods and delivery?

Research Example: Student Writing Habits

Let's use an example to illustrate what happens at the beginning of a research project. Like us, you might be interested in student writing habits. In particular, you might research when (and why) students begin a research project: Do they begin when it is assigned? Two weeks in advance? The night before?

Other researchers have looked at this issue, so you might begin by examining what they have found. These **secondary sources**, the findings of other thinkers, constitute the critical conversation and might give you ideas for how you might proceed in your own project. Thus, examining this conversation might function as **pre-writing**, **brainstorming**, or **invention** for your research. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke uses the metaphor of a party to describe how critical conversations work: When you arrive at the party, the conversations have been going on for a while, and guests take turns articulating their points of view, sometimes talking over each other, sometimes interrupting, laughing, disagreeing, and agreeing. After listening for a while, you understand the conversation and have something to say, so you chime in, maybe building on what a previous guest has said or contrasting your ideas with a friend's. Finally, you're tired and have to head home, but when you do, the sounds of the party are still ringing in your ears, and the conversation will clearly continue.

But if you're conducting **primary research** that moves beyond working with sources, the key is to next find out what this particular issue looks like in your local context, or in a specific context in which you're interested. Most likely, scholars have not examined the issue of when students begin their assignments at your institution, and many factors may impact your context that might make your findings different than what you've learned from other scholars. Research methods give researchers recognizable ways to continue the party conversation started by secondary sources.

So the next step is effective **research design**. You might articulate this plan in a **research proposal**, further detailed at the end of this chapter. When you are beginning a new research project, the design is expected to be mixed up and messy, because oftentimes you are sorting through many different possibilities. Thus, we encourage you to notice and to write about the messiness of an emerging research design, pausing often to pose the following questions: What are you wondering about now? and, How are these curiosities connecting, drawing your attention to matters you hadn't considered before? While it's important to notice these inklings as you go, many effective researchers also write about them as a way to record (to help with memory) and focus. The activity of writing while researching demands patience and persistence, and yet the emerging research design will be magnitudes more refined in later stages as a result.

Design your research project so that your questions, methods, data, findings, and conclusions match up and so that you select or develop **primary source** data that will be most useful for your particular interest. For instance, if you only have data for about 30 students on campus, you can't generalize about how all students approach the writing process. If you only know when these students start working on a given writing project, you won't know why they started at that particular time. This doesn't mean the information you have isn't useful; it just means that you need to stay close to your data and only make sense of the information you have. Make note of things you want to know and wish you had more data about so you can develop the project if the opportunity arises.

For this research project on timing in student writing projects, you might develop a survey that asks students when they begin their research project as well as a series of related questions about motivation and timing. If you design a survey that gives students choices to select answers that range from "I begin a project when it is assigned" to "I begin a project the morning that it's due," you will develop quantitative data, or representative numbers, that answer your question. If you're interested in longer, more nuanced answers, you might also provide open-ended questions on your survey, and you'll develop both **quantitative** and **qualitative** data, or non-numeric data not organized according to a specific, numerical pattern.

A survey develops data that might be easily counted and categorized and can be offered to many folks. But you might be interested in more specific, extensive qualitative data than what you can gather through a survey. Your interest might be not just when students start a project, but also why they start at that specific time and if that starting time is a habit or if it depends on what they're writing about or in which class it is assigned. If these are your interests, it might be more effective to work with people to develop an **interview protocol** or a **case-study** approach, methods that would require you to ask fewer people about their study habits but would allow you to develop a deeper understanding of each individual student's writing habits. One isn't necessarily better or worse. Like all research methods, each approach provides different data and different opportunities for analysis. It just depends on what you want to know.

Surveys, interviews—these might be methods with which you're familiar, but there are lots of other useful methods for working with people. You might want to understand student writing processes by looking at all of a particular student's writing for a given project. Instead of asking the student about her habits and working with reported data, or information that someone has told you, you might use a kind of **textual analysis** to read all of her notes and drafts for a particular project to better understand not just what she reports about her writing practices but how and what and when she actually writes in the lead up to a due date. Sometimes our perceptions of our actions differ than what we actually do, particularly in regard to writing habits, so collecting data that's not reported can be helpful. Or you might want to **observe** that student while she writes to notice how often she takes breaks, if she texts while she writes, or if she listens to music. You might ask her to take pictures of herself or her writing environment at different points during the writing process, and you might develop a comparative **visual analysis** of the images.

Try This: Plan Your Own Writing Research Project (30 minutes)

What are your research questions about writing? Consider the examples we've given and develop your own questions on the topic, then think about possible methods you can use to investigate those questions by doing the following:

- List your interests in and questions about writing and the research process.
- Identify one area of interest on your list and develop it into an effective research question (a question that does not have a yes/no answer, one that requires primary research to answer).
- Consider what methods might be appropriate to help you answer the question you have identified.

Research Example: Access to Clean Water

Here's an example of how to develop a research plan. Imagine you're interested in developing a project about water, a topic that has been in the news quite a bit as of late. Depending on your specific interest and the kind of data you are interested in collecting and working with, you can design very different research proposals. The following list will aid you in determining an approach based on where your interest lies:

- **If you want to work with sources**, maybe you'll select developing a "worknet" as a research method. Your work with sources would find a focal article to generate a radial diagram as you select and highlight connections. One emerging connection, such as a linkage between long-term health outcomes and access to water filtration systems, can begin to crystalize as a research question that guides you in seeking and finding further sources or in choosing other methods appropriate to pairing with the question.
- **If you want to work with words**, maybe you'll select content analysis as a research method to make sense of the discourse you find on your local water treatment plant's website. You might find that there is specialized or technical language, such as multiple mentions of contamination of which you were not aware, or terms with which you are unfamiliar (e.g., acidity, PPM, or pH). Gathering these terms and beginning to investigate their meanings can serve as the genesis of an emerging research focus.
- **If you want to work with people**, maybe you'll select survey as a research method, and you'll distribute a survey about drinking water to

everyone in your classes, perhaps asking questions about their uses of water fountains and bottle refill stations or their knowledge about where their water comes from. You may learn that folks in your community have not had consistent access to potable water.

- **If you want to work with places and things**, maybe you'll select site observation as a research method, and you'll schedule a visit to your local water treatment plant. You may discover upon visiting that the plant is adjacent to a number of factories, or that it is difficult to access, perhaps that there is no one to give you a tour, or that much of the area is off limits. All of these on-site discoveries, carefully chronicled, substantiate distinctive ways of knowing not otherwise available.
- **If you want to work with images**, maybe you'll visit a local river, stream, or lake shore and photograph scenes where litter and wildlife are in close proximity, or where signs communicate about expectations for environmental care. A selection of such images may stand as a convincing set of visual evidence and may accompany a simple map identifying locations where you found problems or where additional signage is needed.

The data you work with and the conclusions you can draw are dependent on the research method you select. Each approach provides particular insights into your topic and the world more broadly.

Try This: Brainstorming with Methods (30 minutes)

We've illustrated two examples, one focusing on the timing of student writing projects and another focusing on water. Now try this out on your own. Select an interest and work through how each of the methods listed below would generate different data with the potential to draw different kinds of connections.

- Working with sources
- Working with words
- Working with people
- Working with places and things
- Working with images

As you consider an interest in light of each of these research methods, now would also be a good time to revisit the book's table of contents and then to turn to the chapters themselves to leaf around and begin to see the more specific and nuanced approaches to the methods under each heading.

Research Across the Disciplines

Research conventions, or the expectations about how research is conducted and written about, differ across the disciplines—whether that is theatre, mathematics, criminal justice, anthropology, etc. Some disciplines generally value quantitative data over qualitative data and vice versa. Many disciplines gravitate to certain methods and methodologies and specific patterns of writing up and citing data. Usually these conventions can be rhetorically traced to the values of a particular discipline. For instance, many humanities disciplines (English and World Languages, for instance) favor using MLA style to cite sources, and many social science disciplines (Psychology and Sociology, for instance) generally adhere to APA style. One of the primary differences in these citation styles is that MLA generally privileges author name and page number, which can be traced to the importance of specific wording at the heart of language study. APA privileges author name and year, which can be traced to the ways that social sciences value when something was published.

Citation conventions are one of the most concrete, visible differences that distinguish research across disciplines. But the differences are often much deeper and more abstract. How do you decide which method is appropriate for a particular research project? How do you make data meaningful in a particular context? The way you answer these questions constitutes your **research methodology**, or your thinking about a research project—and methodology, similar to citation style, usually demonstrates disciplinary values. Whether or not you state your methodology, everyone has a way of thinking about the method they choose and how the data they are using matters. Articulating a methodology simply makes that approach transparent to your audience and clear to yourself. Thus, a research methodology is the approach to a method, or the understanding and thinking that organizes a particular method, as we show in Figure 1.1. Returning again to the etymology of “method” noted earlier (meta- and -hodos), consider the new part of the term, -ology. This addition assigns to method its reason for being selected. Accounting explicitly for the rationale, motives, and appropriateness of a research design, a methodology answers to justifications, underlying values, and established traditions for how knowledge is made and what kinds of knowledge matters in a given discipline.

For example, if you survey 100 people at your university about the timing of their writing projects, and you develop quantitative data as a result of your survey, you present that data as meaningful and suggest that such numbers provide a useful window into understanding student writing. However, you might not agree with this approach. You might think that to really understand student writing, you need to talk to students and ask open-ended questions. Or, you might believe that reported data about writing behaviors is not meaningful because we know that what people say they do and what they actually do are often very different things. You may believe that we need mixed methods to most effectively provide a portrait of student writing on campus, so you might design your study such that you incorporate both survey and interview data. Ultimately the kind of data that methodology values is related to disciplinary values, and as you select a research project, a professional focus, and a profession, you will inherit disciplinary values. For example, researchers in the humanities might especially value qualitative data, and researchers in STEM fields might especially value quantitative data. As you become a more ingrained member of a disciplinary community (for instance when the major or job you take starts to feel familiar) we encourage you to keep questioning the methodology and values you inherit.

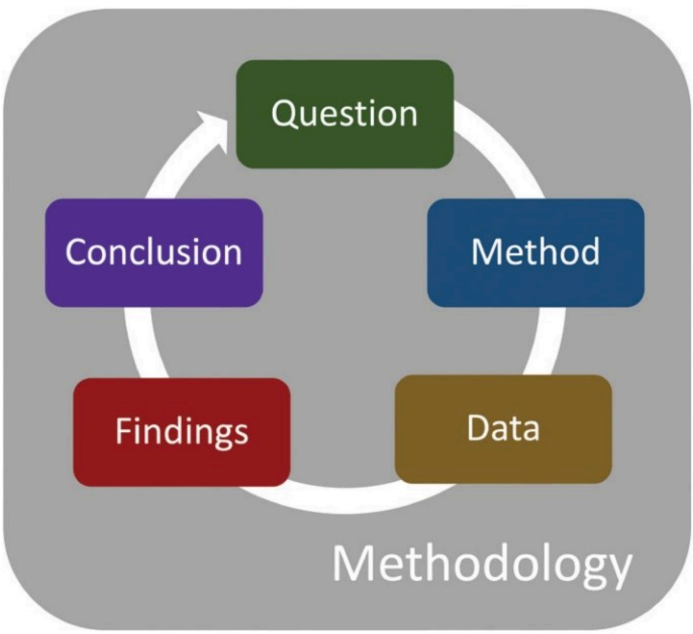

Figure 1: Components of methodology in research design

In Figure 2, we show how developing more questions along the way in all parts of your research design may give way to more complexity in your project.

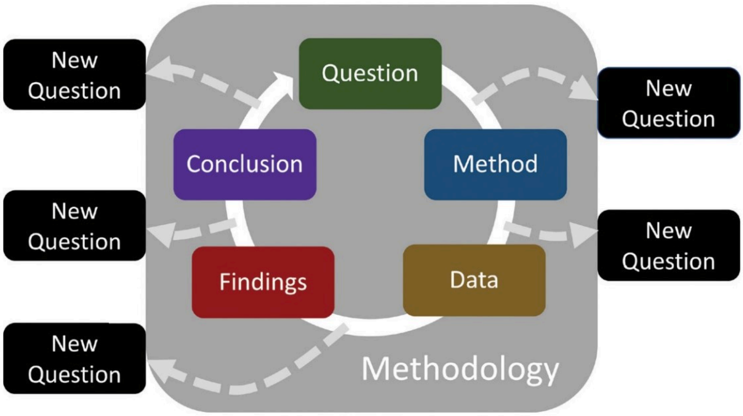

Figure 2: Complexity of research design

Critical conversations about research are both normative, in that they usually bring together many scholars' thinking about a particular issue, and disruptive, in that new findings can up-end a particular conversation. Much of these changes are attributable to developments in methodology, such as updates in how we value a particular method or how we interpret certain findings. Changes to methodologies often cause significant ruptures in research communities. We are familiar with some of these large ruptures: the earth revolves around the sun instead of the reverse, bleeding a patient does not make her healthier, students learn most effectively through practice rather than listening by rote, etc. It is not always easy to come across findings that cause a rupture; however, as you examine the evolution of critical conversations over time, you might notice that they change slowly as new ruptures slowly become accepted in their associated communities.

Using Research Methods Ethically

The decisions you make in developing an effective research question, matching it to an appropriate research method, and then responsibly analyzing the implications of your findings (research design), are especially important because research is **subjective**. Subjectivity is often seen as negative and is frequently leveled as a reason to mistrust a decision or judgment, as in, "You're just being subjective." But: all research is subjective, all research is communication. Of course, not all scholars and fields believe this, but let us try to convince you, because it is important. This belief is central to conducting ethical research.

There is no pure objectivity when it comes to research. Research is conducted by people, all of whom have different ideas about effective research, but researchers abide by a code of ethics that holds them to standards that help them maintain safety and develop meaningful research. Even quantitative research, even computer algorithms that identify trends—all of the methods associated with developing this data are engineered by people and are, thus, subjective. And this is a good thing!

Instead of striving for **objective** research (an impossibility), we strive for ethical research. **Ethical research** takes into account the fact that people perform research and that their research designs are impacted by their own **subjectivities**: the thoughts, beliefs, and values that make us human. As researchers, it is essential to be reflective on our subjectivities, mitigate subjectivities that might make us conduct research unfairly, and adhere to high ethical standards for research.

Keywords

research methods, canons of rhetoric, curiosity, rhetorical orientation, research process

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Attributions

37.

FINDING THE GOOD ARGUMENT OR WHY BOTHER WITH LOGIC?

Rebecca Jones

Abstract

This essay, "Finding the Good Argument OR Why Bother With Logic," by Rebecca Jones comes from *Writing Spaces*. Public argument has been compromised by either/or argumentation strategies and can often be characterized with the metaphor "argument is war," as originally proposed by Lakoff and Johnson. Yet in this article, Rebecca

Jones discusses the usual blocks to ethical argumentation and offers three preferred models that provide theoretical and practical methods for recognizing and inventing good arguments: classical rhetoric, Toulmin, and pragma-dialectics.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

The word argument often means something negative. In Nina Paley's cartoon (see Figure 1), the argument is literally a cat fight. 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.

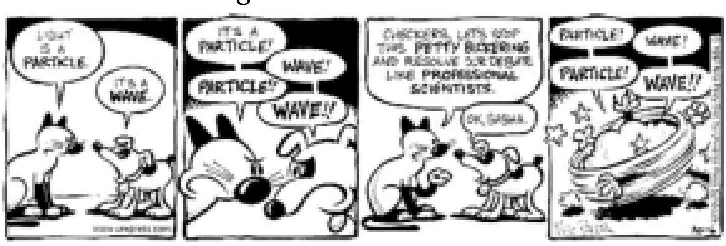

Figure 1. This cartoon demonstrates the absurdity of either/or arguments. (© 1997-1998 Nina Paley. Image available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike license.)

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 defendour 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 like civil disobedience that are hardly inactive. 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.

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 last 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 not to say that all public arguments set out to mislead their audiences, rather that the discussions they offer masquerading as arguments are often merely opinions or a spin 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 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 (see Thinking Outside the Text). 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. Even more troubling is the fact that participants do not even seem to agree about 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.

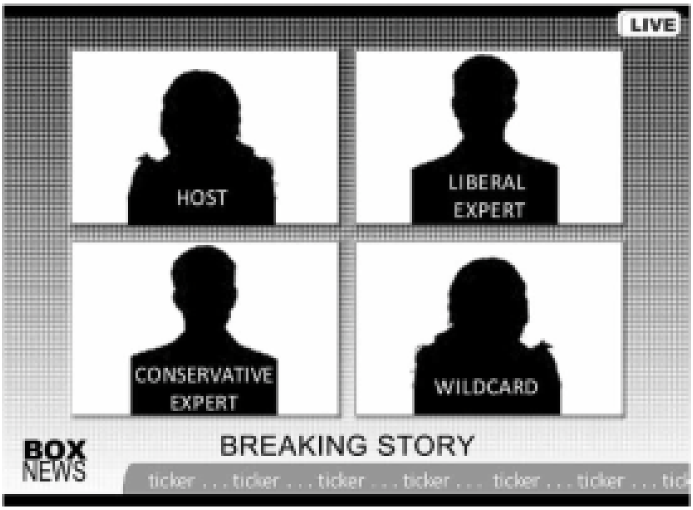

Figure 2. This mock up of a typical news show created by Colin Charlton offers a visual of the attempt to offer many "sides" of an argument.

Activity: Thinking Outside the Text

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?

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" is pro 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 fallacious or 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.

Activity: Finding Middle Ground

Outline the pro and con arguments for the following issues:

1. Gun Control
2. Cap and Trade
3. Free Universal Healthcare

In a group, develop an argument that finds a compromise or middle ground between two positions. 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 pragmadialectics, this chapter presents models of argumentation beyond pro and con. Paying more addition to the details of an argument can offer a strategy for developing sound, ethically aware arguments.

What Can We Learn from 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" (Murphy 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" (Murphy 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 spindoctors 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, "Aristotle's Rhetoric" 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, "Aristotle's Rhetoric" 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 at 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.

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 3) starts from a premise that is a generalization about a large class of ideas, people, etc. and moves to a specific conclusion about a smaller category of ideas or things (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:

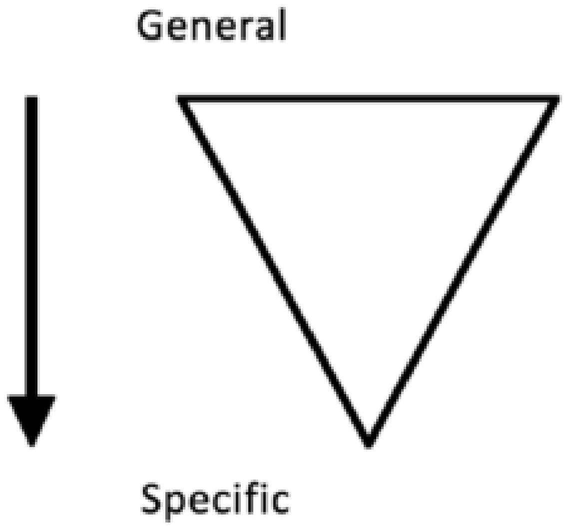

Figure 3. Deductive Reasoning

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

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 administrated 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 to summarize the primary rebuttal so that Fish could then offer his extended version of his standpoint (see link to argument in Question #1 at the end of the text).

Inductive reasoning moves in a different direction than deductive reasoning (see Figure 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). 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 prove that the point is true.

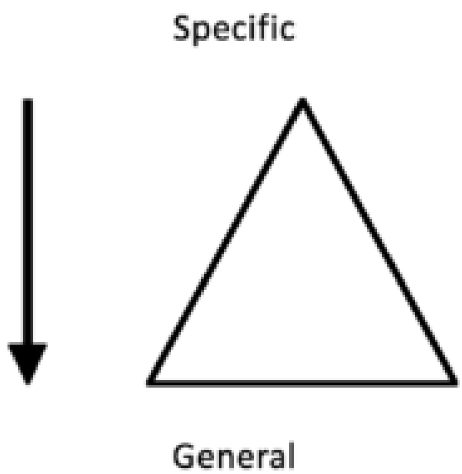

Figure 4. Inductive Reasoning

Here is another example. In Ann Coulter’s most recent 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 life,

children, or marriage 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 thought (see Activity: Applying Inductive and Deductive Reasoning). To write an "analysis paper" is to use inductive reasoning.

Activity: Applying Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

For each standpoint, create a deductive argument AND an inductive argument. When you are finished, share with your group members and decide which logical strategy offers a more successful, believable, and/or ethical argument for the particular standpoint. Feel free to modify the standpoint to find many possible arguments.

1. a. Affirmative Action should continue to be legal in the United
   States.
   b. Affirmative Action is no longer useful in the United States.
2. The arts should remain an essential part of public education.
3. Chose a very specific argument on your campus (parking, tuition, curriculum) and create

deductive and inductive arguments to support the standpoint.

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, to 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 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, Rhetoric 1356a).

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.

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.

> Car Commercial: (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 (MLK), or one's own character as a method for appealing to an audience.

> Car Commercial: Eco-conscious Americans drive a Ford Escape.
>
> OR
>
> [Insert favorite movie star] drives a Ford Escape.

Pathos: Using emotionally driven images or language to sway your
audience.

> Car Commercial: Images of a pregnant women 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 (see Activity: Developing Audience Awareness). Understanding the appeals helps us to make better rhetorical choices in designing our arguments. If you think about the appeals as a choice, their value is clear.

Activity: Developing Audience Awareness

Imagine you have been commissioned by your school food service provider to create a presentation encouraging the consumption of healthier foods on campus.

1. How would you present this to your friends: consider the media you would use, how you present yourself, and how you would begin.
2. How would you present this same material to parents of incoming students?
3. Which appeal is most useful for each audience? Why?

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. (Eemeren, et al. 131)

Instead, Toulmin views argument as it appears in a conversation, in a letter, or 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.

Claim: The basic standpoint presented by a writer/speaker.
Data: The evidence which 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 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, etc.

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

> 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 1993–2002, 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.

Figure 5 demonstrates one way to chart the argument that Paxton and Smith make in "Trust No One." 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 to 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.

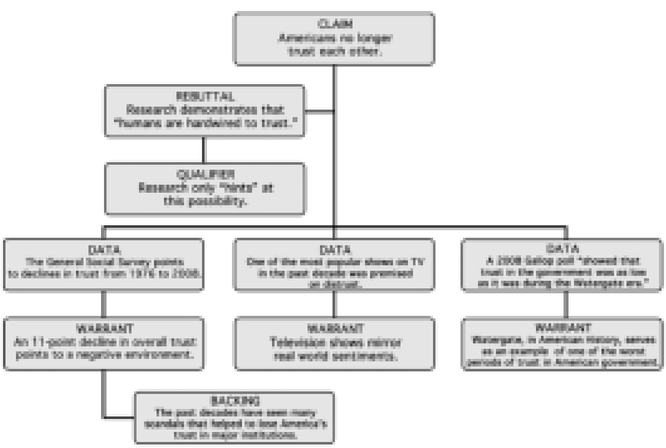

Figure 5. This chart demonstrates the utility of visualizing an argument.

Charting your own arguments and others helps you to 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.

Pragma-Dialectics: A Fancy Word for a Close Look at Argumentation

The field of rhetoric has always been interdisciplinary and so it has no problem including argumentation theory. Developed in the Speech Communication Department at the University of Amsterdam, pragma-dialectics is a study of argumentation that focuses on the ethics of one's logical choices in creating an argument. In Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst describe argumentation, simply, as "characterized by the use of language for resolving a difference of opinion" (275). While much of this work quite literally looks at actual speech situations, the work can easily be applied to the classroom and to broader political situations.

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' "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) is not only 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.

What follows is an adaptation of the approach to argumentation found in Chapters 7 and 8 of Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation (Eemeren, et al. 109-54). The rule is listed first, followed by an example of how the rule is often violated.

1. The Freedom Rule

"Parties must not prevent each other from putting forward standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints" (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 green house gas nonsense."

2. The Burden-of-Proof Rule

"A party who puts forward a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so" (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 healthcare: "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.

3. The Standpoint Rule

"A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party" (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 multi-million

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.

4. The Relevance Rule

"A party may defend his or her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint" (119).

Similar to #3, this rule assures that the evidence you use must actually relate to your standpoint. Let's stick with 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 who sell "eco-friendly" products.

5. 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" (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 that "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.

6. 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" (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.

7. 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" (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 above, 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.

8. 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" (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 jelly fish and need medical care. Joe went to the doctor today. He must have been stung by a jelly fish. While this example is obvious (we do not know that Joe went swimming), many argument problems are caused by violating this rule.

9. 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" (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 healthcare to instead argue something like, "The polls show that American's want to change healthcare, but not through the single payer option. My argument was based on my opinion that single payer 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.

10. 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" (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 though deliberate propaganda.

Activity: Following the Rules

Choose a topic to discuss in class or as a group (ex. organic farming, campus parking, gun control).

- Choose one of the rules above and write a short argument (a sentence) that clearly violates the rule. Be prepared to explain WHY it violates the rule.
- Take the fallacious argument you just created in exercise a) and correct it. Write a solid argument that conforms to the rule.

Food for thought: The above rules offer one way to think about shaping an argument paper. Imagine that the argument for your next paper is a dialogue between those who disagree about your topic. After doing research, write out the primary standpoint for your paper. For example: organic farming is a sustainable practice that should be used more broadly. Next, write out a standpoint that might offer a refutation of the argument. For example: organic farming cannot supply all of the food needed by the world's population. Once you have a sense of your own argument and possible refutations, go through the rules and imagine how you might ethically and clearly provide arguments that support your point without ignoring the opposition.

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 (www.americaspeaks.org) 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. The final model, pragma-dialectics, especially, seems to consider argument as a conversation that requires constant vigilance and interaction by participants. Argument as conversation, as new metaphor for public deliberation, has possibilities.

Additional Activities

1. Read Stanley Fish's blog entry titled "Democracy and Education". Choose at least two of the responses to Fish's argument that students are not entitled to free speech rights in the classroom and compare them using the different argumentation models listed above.

2. Following the pragma-dialectic rules, create a

fair and balanced rebuttal to Fish's argument in his "Democracy and Education" blog entry.

3. Use Toulmin's vocabulary to build an argument. Start with a claim and then fill in the chart with your own research, warrants, qualifiers, and rebuttals.

Note

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

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Attributions

38.

CREATING ARGUMENTS

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

What are the features of argument?

Argument is not simply the loud, assertive, unwavering statement of your opinion in the hopes of conquering the opposition. **Argument** is the careful consideration of numerous positions and the careful development of logically sound, carefully constructed assertions that, when combined, offer a worthwhile perspective in an ongoing debate. Certainly, you want to imagine yourself arguing with others—and, you may want to believe your opinion has superior qualities to theirs—but the purpose of argument in the college setting is not to win or shut down a conversation. Rather, it's to illuminate, expand, and further inform a debate happening on a worthwhile subject between reasonable, intelligent people.

Some of the key tools of an argument are the strategies that students are asked to consider when doing a **Rhetorical Analysis**. As you plan and draft your own argument, you must carefully use the following elements of rhetoric to your own advantage: rhetorical appeals, structure, and style.

Rhetorical Appeals

Logos

Logos is the use of logic, data/evidence, statistics, and related facts to establish the practicality and rationality of your ideas. Applying logos is not relegated to just evidentiary support; it is also applied to the way you structure your ideas, claims, and discussion. To have a logically sound argument, you should include:

- a debatable and supportable claim,
- logical reasoning to support your claim,
- rational underlying premises,
- sound evidence and examples to justify the reasoning,
- reasonable projections,
- and concessions & rebuttals.

Additionally, to ensure you are creating a rational discussion, you should avoid logical fallacies, such as indicating the opposition is stupid, which is an ad hominem attack.

Ethos

Ethos is an appeal to credibility and how authors establish their trustworthiness. The ethical and well-balanced use of rhetorical strategies will help you to present yourself as trustworthy and intelligent in your consideration of the topic and in the development of your argument. Another aspect of your credibility as a writer of argument, particularly in the college setting, is your attention to the needs of the audience with regard to presentation and style. In college, this means adhering to the genre expectations of your audience. Consider the following questions to ensure you have established the proper ethos as a student author:

- Have you met the requirements of the writing assignment?
- Have you thought through the purpose of your writing assignment?
- Have you kept your audience in mind in developing your writing?
- Have you cited sources in the manner that your reading audience would expect?
- Have you applied the formatting that is routine for the genre?

Pathos

Academic and scholarly writing often puts more emphasis on logos and ethos than on pathos. However, the use of examples and language that evoke an emotional response in your reader—that gets them to care about your topic—are examples of appeals to pathos. Pathos can be helpful in an argument and is a part of most successful attempts at rhetoric. For academic essays, pathos may be particularly useful in introductory sections, concluding sections, or as ways to make your work memorable, an important component of rhetorical considerations.

Structure

A well-structured argument is one that is carefully planned. It is organized so that the argument has a fluid building of ideas, one onto the other, in order to produce the most persuasive impact or effect on the reader. You should avoid repeating ideas, reasons, or evidence. Instead, consider how each idea in your argument connects to the others. The following are some questions to consider when ensuring a good structure for the conveyance of your discussion:

- Should some ideas come before others?
- Should you build your reasons from simple to complex or from complex to simple?
- Should you present the counterargument before your reasons? Or, would it make more sense for you to present your reasons and then the concessions and rebuttals?
- How can you use clear transitional phrases to facilitate reader comprehension of your argument?

Style/ Eloquence

The relative formality and associated genre conventions you choose to compose in will always vary depending on the rhetorical situation in which you're writing. Be attentive to the audience, genre, purpose, and context of your writing because that will help you decide how to approach your composition. For some writing assignments, you may choose to use short, concise language, poetic or figurative language that evokes the senses, or you may choose to **code-mesh**, integrating multiple languages, dialects, or registers.

It is important to understand what kind of style of writing your audience expects, as delivering your argument in that style could make it more persuasive. And not delivering your argument in the expected style may affect the perception of your ethos.

Attributions

39.

BEYOND "ARGUMENT"

Kate L. Pantelides

It may feel that every **utterance** and **composition** is an argument of sorts. In fact, there is a popular writing textbook entitled, *Everything's An Argument*. And in some ways this claim is true. All compositions have a purpose (though it may not be the one originally intended), and all compositions elicit a response from readers (though readers may not physically "do" anything in response to a text).

Thinking of everything as an argument can certainly be a helpful take on rhetoric, as it may lead to you being more analytical of the attempts at persuasion with which you are routinely surrounded. However, it can also be helpful to examine composition through a different lens, one that doesn't reduce everything to argumentation. Because rhetors aren't always just trying to persuade someone to agree with them – they do other things too.

There are a few approaches to rhetoric and argumentation that demonstrate how multi-faceted composition can be and why we should not focus on merely making or perceiving a traditional notion of "argument." Although it can be tempting to boil down writing and reading to its component points and express it as a simple equation (rhetoric = persuasion; writing = argumentation), this is not how writing and argumentation function broadly.

Invitational Rhetoric

Invitational rhetoric, for instance, approaches communication as collaborative rather than argumentative or combative. It acknowledges differences in perspectives of rhetors, but it invites participants to share ideas and broaden understanding rather than persuade or change. Articulated by Sonja K. Voss and Cindy L. Griffin, invitational rhetoric responds to associations of argumentation as hostile and aggressive, offering a different purpose for and examination of composing practices. The Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative sums it up as follows: "The utmost objective of invitational rhetoric is to share one's views so that other participants' views may be broadened, and vice versa. It is an educational experience in which no one person is thought to be more valuable."

Rogerian Argument

Rogerian Argument is similarly devised to build understanding amongst rhetors, particularly those who believe differently. This form of argumentation is named after psychologist Carl Rogers who, in 1951, developed this argumentative structure so that people on different sides of an issue would have the experience of believing counterarguments. A Rogerian Argument should include the moves/parts listed below:

- "a discussion of the problem from both points of view that uses value-neutral language
- a discussion of the writer's opponent's point of view and a selection of facts or assertions the writer might be willing to concede to his opponent
- a discussion of the writer's point of view and a selection of facts or assertions the writer's opponent might be able to accept about his point of view
- a thesis that establishes a compromise between these two points of view and represents concessions from both the writer and his opponent" (Moxley).

Joseph Moxley at Writing Commons describes the purpose of such an argument as an opportunity to "listen with understanding." By this, [Rogers] meant that people should not only try to understand that someone holds a particular viewpoint but also try to get a sense of what it's like to believe that.

Play the Believing Game

Peter Elbow's admonition to **"Play the Believing Game"** grows from a similar interest. Elbow developed this idea in the early 70s and alternately calls the technique a "game" and a method – methodological believing. Ultimately it boils down to something that sounds easy, but is very difficult in practice: "the believing game is the disciplined practice of trying to be as welcoming or accepting as possible to every idea we encounter: not just listening to views different from our own and holding back from arguing with them; not just trying to restate them without bias; but actually trying to believe them" (1). Elbow describes this practice as counter to the doubting game: "The doubting game represents the kind of thinking most widely honored and taught in our culture. It's sometimes called 'critical thinking.' It's the disciplined practice of trying to be as skeptical and analytic as possible with every idea we encounter" (1). The purpose of the believing game isn't to believe everything we hear, but rather to bring an orientation of openness to new ideas and to identify points of agreement that we might not otherwise, had we simply been critiquing.

Focus on Rhetorical Invention

Ultimately, a focus on rhetorical **invention**, rather than rhetorical **delivery** can also change our expectation of writing to be purely about argument. You may remember the five **canons of rhetoric** from the textbook section on rhetoric: **Invention**, **Style**, **Arrangement**, **Memory**, and **Delivery**. Invention is just like it sounds; it focuses on the beginning of the writing process—that exciting time when you don't have to worry so much about whether your ideas are "good," your writing is polished, or whether or not you'll be able to fully flesh out the thoughts you're working through. Delivery is equally important. It's often the last part of the writing process, and it addresses how the composition you've created ultimately gets delivered to an audience. Delivery might take the form of a digital image, a written paper, an audio podcast, a video, a poster, etc (See Remediation and Delivery). However we sometimes spend so much time talking about delivery that we forget to really engage in invention, when we're often not as wrapped up in convincing, persuading, or arguing. When we truly engage in the invention stage we often spend more time asking questions, learning, or potentially changing our mind about what we had initially set out to argue. And we often find that we truly enjoy the writing process.

40.

ON THE OTHER HAND: THE ROLE OF ANTITHETICAL WRITING IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES

Steven Krause

Abstract

"On the Other Hand: The Role of Antithetical Writing in First Year Composition Courses" is by Steven Krause, and comes from *Writing Spaces*. Steven Krause invites writers to engage in a somewhat unconventional planning exercise:

to explore the antithesis in their writing projects. Krause explains how doing so tests out the strength of an argument and creates an opportunity to generate content for the essay. An antithesis is a counter-perspective, a counter argument. When we draft arguments, we sometimes get so caught up in checking off all of the boxes of what we need—a claim at the end of the intro paragraph, reasons, a counterargument—that we do not pay enough attention to what persuasion actually means, and how persuasion is audience-centered. Read this essay to find strategies for developing counterargument and response.

Read the text below or as a PDF.

Besides my own experiences as a student many years ago in courses similar to the ones you and your classmates are in now, I think the most important influence on how I have approached research and argumentative writing came from academic debate. Debate taught me at least two ways to approach an argument that were not part of my formal schooling. First, academic policy debate1 taught me that argumentation is a contest—a sport, not at all different from tennis or basketball or figure skating or gymnastics, an activity where you have to work with a team, you have to practice, and the goal is to "win." And winning in academic debate happens: while it is a sport that is judged, it is an activity, like gymnastics or figure skating, where the rules for judging are surprisingly well codified. I will admit that seeing a debate or argument as something "to be won" has not always served me well in life, for there are any number of situations in which the framework for an argument is perhaps better perceived as an opportunity to listen and to compromise than to score points.

Second, because of the way that academic debate is structured, I learned quickly the importance of being able to perceive and argue multiple and opposing views on the same issue. Not unlike other sports where players play both offense and defense—baseball and basketball immediately come to mind—debaters have to argue both for and against the year's resolution, which was the broad proposition that framed all of the particular cases debate teams put forward for the entire season. In fact, it was not at all uncommon for a team to strenuously advocate for a controversial position one round—"the U.S. should engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—only to strenuously argue the opposite position—"the U.S. should *not* engage in one-on-one talks with North Korea"—the very next round. Seeing "multiple positions" was not simply a good idea; it was one of the rules of the game.

I've brought these past experiences into my current teaching in a number of ways, including one of the exercises I am discussing here, what my students and I call antithesis writing. These exercises will help you gain a better understanding of how to shape an argument, how to more fully explore a topic, and how to think more carefully about your different audiences.

In this essay, I borrow heavily from my own online textbook, *The Process of Research Writing,* which is available for free at http://stevendkrause.com/tprw. You might want to visit that site for additional information about this exercise and other exercises I've put together for teaching the research writing process.

Thesis ~~Is Not~~ Doesn't Have to Be a Bad Thing (Or Why Write Antithesis Essays in the First Place)

Somewhere along the way, "thesis" became a dirty word in a lot of writing courses, inherently bound up and attached to all that is wrong with what composition historians and the writing scholars call the "Current-Traditional" paradigm of writing instruction. Essentially, this approach emphasizes the product and forms of writing (in most nineteenth century American rhetoric textbooks, these forms were Exposition, Description, Narration, and Argument), issues of syntax and grammar, correctness, and so forth. It didn't matter so much what position a writer took; what mattered most was that the writer got the form correct.

"Thesis" is often caught in/lumped into this current-traditional paradigm, I think mainly because of the rigid role and placement of a thesis in the classic form of the five-paragraph essay. Most of you and your classmates already know about this: in the five-paragraph formula, the thesis is the last sentence of the introduction, is divided into three parts, and it rigidly controls the structure of the following four paragraphs. Certainly this overly prescriptive and narrow definition of thesis is not useful. Jasper Neel describes this sort of formula in his book *Plato, Derrida, and Writing* as "anti-writing," and I think that Sharon Crowley is correct in arguing that the kind of teaching ex-emplified by the five-paragraph essay is more akin to filling out a form than it is to actual "writing."

But when I discuss "thesis" here, I mean something much more broad and organic. I mean an initial direction that every research- writing project must take. A thesis advocates a specific and debatable position, is not a statement of fact nor a summary of events, and it answers the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" You should begin with a working thesis that attempts to answer these questions simply as a way of getting your research process started. True, these initial working theses are usually broad and unwieldy, but the emphasis here is on *working,* because as you research and think more carefully, you will inevitably change your thesis. *And this is good*— change is the by-product of learning, and seeing a working thesis differently is both the purpose and the opportunity of the antithesis exercise.

So, I think the first and probably most important reason to consider antithesis writing is to test and strengthen the validity of the working thesis. After all, there isn't much "debatable" about a working thesis like "crime is bad" or "cleaning up the environment is good," which suggests that there probably isn't a viable answer to the questions "what's your point?" and "why should I care?" Considering op- posing and differing views can help you find the path to make a vague generalization like "crime is bad" into a more pointed, researchable, and interesting observation.

The second general value for antithesis exercises is to raise more awareness of your audience—the potential readers who would disagree with your working thesis, along with readers who are more favorable to your point. Sometimes, readers won't be convinced no matter what evidence or logic a writer presents; but it seems to me that writers have an obligation to at least try.

Generating Antithetical Points in Five Easy Steps

I've already discussed this step in some detail:

Step 1: Have a Working Thesis and Make Sure You Have Begun the Research Process.

Developing a good antithetical argument is not something you can do as a "first step" in the research process. Generally, you need to have already developed a basic point and need some evidence and research to develop that point. In other words, the process of developing an antithetical position has to come *after* you develop an initial position in the first place.

Step 2: Consider the Direct Opposite of Your Working Thesis.

This is an especially easy step if your working thesis is about a controversial topic:

> *Working thesis:*
>
> To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons.
>
> *Antithesis:*
>
> To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should be allowed to carry concealed weapons.

> *Working thesis:*
>
> Drug companies should be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.
>
> *Antithesis:*
>
> Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on television.

This sort of simple change of qualifiers also exposes weak theses, because, generally speaking, the opposite position of a proposition that everyone accepts as true is one that everyone easily accepts as false. For example, if you begin with a working thesis like "Drunk driving is bad" or "Teen violence is bad" to their logical opposites, you end up with an opposite that is ridiculous—"Drunk driving is good" or "Teen violence is good." What that signals is that it is probably time to revisit your original working thesis.

Usually though, considering the opposite of a working thesis is a little more complicated. For example:

> *Working Thesis:*
>
> Many computer hackers commit serious crimes and represent a major expense for internet-based businesses.
>
> *Antitheses:*
>
> Computer hackers do not commit serious crimes.
> Computer hacking is not a major expense for internet-based businesses.

Both of the antithetical examples are the opposite of the original working theses, but each focuses on different aspects of the working thesis.

Step 3: Ask "Why" about Possible Antithetical

Arguments.

Creating antitheses by simply changing the working thesis to its opposite typically demands more explanation. The best place to develop more details with your antithesis is to ask "why." For example:

> ***Why*** should drug companies not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs? Because . . .
>
> - The high cost of television advertising needlessly drives up the costs of prescriptions.
> - Advertisements too often confuse patients and offer advice that contradicts the advice of doctors.
>
> ***Why*** are the crimes committed by computer hackers not serious? Because . . .
>
> - They are usually pranks or acts of mischief.
> - Computer hackers often expose problems for Internet busi- nesses before serious crimes result.

The point here is to dig a little further into your antithetical argument. Asking "why" is a good place to begin that process.

Step 4: Examine Alternatives to Your Working Thesis.

Often, the best antithetical arguments aren't about "the opposite" so much as they are about alternatives. For example, the working thesis "To prevent violence on campus, students, staff, and faculty should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons" presumes that a serious potential cause for violence on campuses is the presence of guns. However, someone could logically argue that the more important cause of violence on college campuses is alcohol and drug abuse. Certainly the number of incidents involving underage drinking and substance abuse outnumber those involving firearms on college campuses, and it is also probably true that many incidents of violence on college campuses involve drinking or drugs.

Now, unlike the direct opposite of your working thesis, the alternatives do not necessarily negate your working thesis. There is no reason why a reader couldn't believe that *both* concealed weapons *and* alcohol and substance abuse contribute to violence on campuses. But in considering alternatives to your working thesis, the goal is to "weigh" the positions against each other. I'll return to this matter of "weighing your position" later.

Step 5: Imagine Hostile Audiences.

Whenever you are trying to develop a clearer understanding of the antithesis of your working thesis, you need to think about the kinds of audiences who would disagree with you. By thinking about the opposites and alternatives to your working thesis, you are already starting to do this because the opposites and the alternatives are what a hostile audience might think.

Sometimes, potential readers are hostile to a particular working thesis because of ideals, values, or affiliations they hold that are at odds with the point being advocated by the working thesis. For example, people who identify themselves as being "pro-choice" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that restrict access to abortion; people who identify themselves as being "pro- life" on the issue of abortion would certainly be hostile to an argument for laws that provide access to abortion.

At other times, audiences are hostile to the arguments of a working thesis because of more crass and transparent reasons. For example, the pharmaceutical industry disagrees with the premise of the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" because they stand to lose billions of dollars in lost sales. Advertising companies and television broadcasters would also be against this working thesis because they too would lose money. You can probably easily imagine some potential hostile audience members who have similarly selfish reasons to oppose your point of view.

Of course, some audiences will oppose your working thesis based on a different interpretation of the evidence and research. This sort of difference of opinion is probably most common with research projects that are focused on more abstract and less definitive subjects. But there are also different opinions about evidence for topics that you might think would have potentially more concrete "right" and "wrong" interpretations. Different researchers and scholars can look at the same evidence about a subject like gun control and arrive at very different conclusions.

Regardless of the reasons why your audience might be hostile to the argument you are making with your working thesis, it is helpful to try to imagine your audience as clearly as you can. What sort of people are they? What other interests or biases might they have? Are there other political or social factors that you think are influencing their point of view? If you want to persuade at least some members of this hostile audience that your point of view and your interpretation of the research is correct, you need to know as much about your hostile audience as you possibly can.

Strategies for Answering Antithetical Arguments

It might not seem logical, but directly acknowledging and addressing positions that are different from the one you are holding in your research can actually make your position stronger. When you take on the antithesis in your research project, it shows you have thought carefully about the issue at hand and you acknowledge that there is no clear and easy "right" answer. There are many different ways you might incorporate the antithesis into your research to make your own thesis stronger and to address the concerns of those readers who might oppose your point of view. For now, focus on three basic strategies: directly refuting your opposition, weighing your position against the opposition, and making concessions.

Directly Refuting Your Opposition

Perhaps the most obvious approach, one way to address those potential readers who might raise objections to your arguments, is to simply refute their objections with better evidence and reasoning. Of course, this is an example of yet another reason why it is so important to have good research that supports your position: when the body of evidence and research is on your side, it is usually a lot easier to make a strong point.

Answering antithetical arguments with research that supports your point of view is also an example of where you as a researcher might need to provide a more detailed evaluation of your evidence. The sort of questions you should answer about your own research—who wrote it, where was it published, when was it published, etc.—are important to raise in countering antithetical arguments that you think come from suspicious sources.

Weighing Your Position Against the Opposition

Readers who oppose the argument you are trying to support with your research might do so because they value or "weigh" the implications of your working thesis differently than you do. For example, those op- posed to a working thesis like "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might think this because they think the advantages of advertising drugs on television—increased sales for pharmaceutical companies, revenue for advertising agencies and television stations, and so forth—are more significant than the disadvantages of advertising drugs on television.

Besides recognizing and acknowledging the different ways of com- paring the advantages and disadvantages suggested by your working thesis, the best way of answering these antithetical arguments in your own writing is to clearly explain how you weigh and compare the evidence. This can be a challenging writing experience because it requires a subtle hand and a broad understanding of multiple sides of your topic. But if in acknowledging to your readers that you have carefully considered the reasons against your working thesis and you can demonstrate your position to be more persuasive, then this process of weighing positions can be very effective.

Making Concessions

In the course of researching and thinking about the antithesis to your working thesis and its potentially hostile audiences, it may become clear to you that these opposing views have a point. When this is the case, you may want to consider revising your working thesis or your approach to your research to make some concessions to these antitheti- cal arguments.

Sometimes, my students working on this exercise "make concessions" to the point of changing sides on their working thesis—that is, in the process of researching, writing, and thinking about their topic, a researcher moves from arguing for their working thesis to arguing for their antithesis. This might seem surprising, but it makes perfect sense when you remember the purpose of research in the first place. When we study the evidence on a particular issue, we often realize that our initial and uninformed impression or feelings on an issue were simply wrong. That's why we research: we put more trust in opinions based on research than in things based on gut instinct or feelings.

But usually, most concessions to antithetical perspectives are less dramatic and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You might want to employ some qualifying terms to hedge a bit. For example, the working thesis "Drug companies should not be allowed to advertise prescription drugs on TV" might be qualified to "Drug companies *should be closely regulated* about what they are allowed to advertise in TV." I think this is still a strong working thesis, but the revised work- ing thesis acknowledges the objections some might have to the original working thesis.

Of course, you should use these sorts of concessions carefully. An over-qualified working thesis can be just as bad as a working thesis about something that everyone accepts as true: it can become so watered-down as to not have any real significance anymore. A working thesis like “Drug company television advertising is sometimes bad and sometimes good for patients” is over-qualified to the point of taking no real position at all.

But You Still Can't Convince Everyone...

I’d like to close by turning away a bit from where I started this es- say, the influence of competitive debate on my early education about argument. In debate, an argument is part of the game, the catalyst for the beginning of a competition. The same is often true within college classrooms. Academic arguments are defined in terms of their hypothetical nature; they aren’t actually real but rather merely an intellectual exercise.

But people in the real world do hold more than hypothetical positions, and you can’t always convince everyone that you’re right, no matter what evidence or logic you might have on your side. You prob- ably already know this. We have all been in conversations with friends or family members where, as certain as we were that we were right about something and as hard as we tried to prove we were right, our friends or family were simply unwilling to budge from their positions. When we find ourselves in these sorts of deadlocks, we often try to smooth over the dispute with phrases like “You’re entitled to your opinion” or “We will have to agree to disagree,” and then we change the subject. In polite conversation, this is a good strategy to avoid a fight. But in academic contexts, these deadlocks can be frustrating and difficult to negotiate.

A couple of thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher and rhetorician Aristotle said that all of us respond to arguments based on three basic characteristics or appeals: logos or logic, pathos or emotional character, and ethos, the writer’s or speaker’s perceived character. Academic writing tends to rely most heavily on logos and ethos because academics tend to highly value arguments based on logical research and arguments that come from writers with strong character-building qualifications—things like education, experience, previous publications, and the like. But it’s important to remember that pathos is al- ways there, and particularly strong emotions or feelings on a subject can obscure the best research.

Most academic readers have respect for writers when they successfully argue for positions that they might not necessarily agree with. Along these lines, most college writing instructors can certainly respect and give a positive evaluation to a piece of writing they don’t completely agree with as long as it uses sound logic and evidence to support its points. However, all readers—students, instructors, and everyone else—come to your research project with various preconceptions about the point you are trying to make. Some of them will al- ready agree with you and won’t need much convincing. Some of them will never completely agree with you, but will be open to your argument to a point. And some of your readers, because of the nature of the point you are trying to make and their own feelings and thoughts on the matter, will never agree with you, no matter what research evidence you present or what arguments you make. So, while you need to consider the antithetical arguments to your thesis in your research project to convince as many members of your audience as possible that the point you are trying to make is correct, you should remember that you will likely not convince all of your readers all of the time.

Discussion

1. When was the last time you had to argue for a specific position on an issue? What was the issue? Were you alone or did you have friends to back you up? How did you find evidence to support your position? Did you "win" the argument by getting your way or by convincing the opponents of you were right? Why did you win or not win?
2. What are some issues have you recently talked about in courses (other than writing)? What were some theses offered by students in those classes (or by the professor)? Pick one or two of the theses you found most intriguing (or that elicited the most conversation) and see if you can write the antithesis. Is this im- possible without doing some research? Why or why not? What would you do next, if you needed to follow

up on this thinking exercise as a writing project?

3. Because of research on a particular issue, have you ever changed your mind about what you believed was right? What was the issue? Why did you change your mind? Or why not?
4. When you've been in classes and not agreed with other stu- dents or the professor, did you offer your differing opinion? Was that based on research or your gut instinct or your own experience? What was the most effective process you've used for participating in debate in classes? Or has this been some- thing you're unwilling to be involved in? Why has that been the case?

Note

Explaining "academic policy debate" is not my goal in this essay. But I will say that academic debate bears almost no resemblance to "debates" between political candidates or to the stereotypical way debate tends to be depicted on television shows or in movies. Certainly debate involves a certain intellectual prowess; but I think it's fair to say that debate is a lot closer to a competitive sport than a classroom exercise. Two excellent introductions to the world of academic debate are the Wikipedia entry for "Policy Debate" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_debate) and the 2007 documentary movie *Resolved*.

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Attributions

PART V

REMEDIATION AND DELIVERY

What happens when writing moves beyond the page?

In this section, we shift to Delivery—a key part of the composing process that asks you to think about how your message reaches others. These chapters focus on remediation (the process of adapting your ideas into new formats), and multimodality (the intentional blending of text, image, sound, space, and movement). While every piece of writing already uses multiple modes (think of font choices, headings, or spacing), this section challenges you to be purposeful in how you design your work for particular audiences and contexts. Whether you're building a visual presentation, designing a research poster, or experimenting with new forms, you'll be invited to explore how rhetorical effectiveness depends not only on what you say—but how you say it.

We begin with Researching Rhetorical Forms and

Delivery by Jennifer Clary-Lemon, Derek Mueller, and Kate L. Pantelides. This chapter invites you to consider alternative ways to deliver your research, such as through public talks, performances, posters, or other multimodal presentations. The authors explore the rhetorical choices that shape delivery, encouraging you to think beyond the traditional research paper and toward genres that connect more dynamically with audiences.

In An Introduction to and Strategies for Multimodal Composing, Melanie Gagich provides a practical and accessible overview of multimodal composition. She defines key terms, introduces the five modes of communication (linguistic, visual, aural, spatial, and gestural), and shares concrete pre-drafting and drafting strategies to help you create meaningful multimodal texts.

Kate L. Pantelides and Erica M. Stone continue this conversation in Writing Multimodally, where they focus on the rhetorical decisions involved in crafting multimodal projects. This chapter encourages you to think about purpose, audience, and design, offering insight into the flexible and creative thinking that multimodal work requires.

Jenae Cohn's Understanding Visual Rhetoric helps you develop a vocabulary for interpreting and producing visual texts. Through clear examples, she explains how images carry persuasive power and how visual choices can support or undermine your message.

In Beyond Black on White: Document Design and Formatting in the Writing Classroom, Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackelford highlight how design and formatting are not just decorative elements, but central rhetorical features. This chapter offers a crash course in document design and introduces strategies that will help you make thoughtful visual choices in both academic and professional genres.

The final chapter in this section describes MTSU's Celebration of Student Writing (CSW). The CSW highlights the diversity of genres, media, and delivery methods students have used to share their research with real audiences—demonstrating how writing can come alive in public spaces and multimodal formats.

41.

RESEARCHING RHETORICAL FORMS AND DELIVERY

Jennifer Clary-Lemon; Derek Mueller; and Kate L. Pantelides

Abstract

Below is an excerpt from Chapter 8, "Research and the Rhetorical Forms It Takes," in *Try This: Research Methods For Writers*

Researching Rhetorical Forms and Delivery

- your 5th grade science fair experiment
- a viral video of high school math students rapping the quadratic formula
- a five-minute conversation with a family friend about a summer coop position at their company based on your community service

The rhetorical events listed above are all ways that research circulates over time, in different locations, through interactions among people and things. This chapter takes into account the ways that research, oftentimes research-in-progress, circulates. **Circulation** is a contemporary reframing of the rhetorical canon of delivery. **Delivery**, in a classical Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, was primarily concerned with speakers who, in real-time, stood before reasonably attentive audiences to speak persuasively about matters of civic concern. Over two millennia, as writing systems gained legitimacy and as digital media expanded and flourished, so too did the means of delivery multiply. In today's mediascape, delivery remains relevant, but the mechanisms of delivery have shifted because audiences are themselves producers of recirculation and uptake. That is, someone may read an article and re-post it, watch a video and send it on. Secondary circulation is not a new phenomenon, but it has intensified with the rise of social media and the everyday documentary impulses that proliferate streams of social media. People have their mobile devices out, capturing and relaying the richness and wonder (and also ordinariness and banality) in their surroundings.

To put a finer point on this phenomenon of secondary circulation (i.e., uptake and recirculation), Jim Ridolfo and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss introduced the concept of **rhetorical velocity**. As they explain, rhetorical velocity goes beyond delivery to offer "strategic theorizing for how a text might be recomposed (and why it might be recomposed) by third parties, and how this recomposing may be useful or not to the short- or long-term rhetorical objectives of the rhetorician." For a researching writer, this means sharing research in such a way that encourages others to do things with it, including to recirculate it. When others take up the work and continue its circulation, rhetorical velocity increases. The reach and influence of the research stands a greater chance of making a difference in the world.

With the goal of setting research in motion, this chapter begins by acknowledging and then challenging two powerful myths connected with research writing. The first myth is that researchers should only share their work with audiences at the end of a research process. The second myth is that beginning researchers should circulate their work only in small circles, to limited audiences, such as the confines of a class and a teacher. Of course, myths emerge from the world around us. These myths in particular about research writing prevail because there are strong cases to be made for circulating research after the study is fully formed and the work completed. Furthermore, circulating research-in-progress to small, supportive, attentive audiences, such as are customarily available in association with a writing class, also makes sense. These myths prevail, in other words, because there are kernels of long-established wisdom etched into them.

And yet, we seek here to open these myths with the goal of acknowledging what becomes available when we share about works-in-progress and when we engage audiences broader than the classroom.

Try This Together: Delivery and Circulation (30 minutes)

In a small group, develop definitions of delivery and circulation. How are these terms similar? In what ways do they identify something different? What do you think they mean for researchers who are interested in sharing their work with others? Discuss how you have participated in rhetorical circulation. That is, have you ever read or viewed something, then passed it along to someone else with the purpose of asking a question, teaching them, deepening their understanding, or changing their mind?

Our aim in challenging these myths is to expand perspectives on the potential of rhetorical delivery to clarify and activate research activity as it unfolds. Toward this goal, consider our counter-principles:

You can, as a writing researcher, share about your work at any moment in the process. You can write a pre-proposal in which you sketch possible lines of inquiry.

You can prepare and deliver a three-minute presentation to your class or your research group at the moment when you are beginning to gather, read, and annotate sources. You can develop for a gallery crawl a draft of a poster that displays decisions you have made about research design, including the questions that interest you most and the potential complications you foresee. With each of these (and many other) possibilities, research is kept social, and the interactions can be generative for you, for your research team if you are collaborating, and for others who are probably working through comparable research processes themselves.

Delivering the beginning stages of a work-in-progress early and often can help you refine your sense of audience and purpose. The questions you receive will help you make decisions about where to expand, what context to fill in, and what is missing or perhaps understated. It's also possible to revisit a research project long after you believe it was finished and sent off into the world. Five and ten-year retrospectives—look backs—at a research project and asking of it freshly—Why did this work matter? What would I have done differently? How would a comparable study need to be done now, were it to be undertaken again?—these and other reflective questions help researchers focus on the longevity of a study's significance, setting it in relationship to time as well as opening new possibilities for continuing or renewed research.

You can, as a writing researcher, share about your work widely, even while it is in-progress or otherwise unfinished, generating and circulating status updates that invite audience engagement. It may feel risky, yet writing about in-progress research can open your work to outsider feedback, lead to potential collaborations, and build confidence in how you give language to specialized concepts. This is not quite the same as saying you should share everything about the research with other people or that you should post everything about it online. But some measure of practice with delivery and circulation while a project is underway can help you see it as rhetorical work, connecting it with people who are curious about it. When this happens, research writing can become connected to other stakeholders.

We also want to stress the careful consideration that must go into sharing in-progress work. Ethical delivery of in-progress research may be focused and invitational, such as by selecting a narrow issue in a study and inviting perspective. It may also proceed with a goal of keeping your work **public facing**, or aimed toward an external audience, and accountable to people who are not researchers but whose lives may be improved by the questions you are asking and what you are learning about those questions. Ethical delivery of in-progress research seeks to emphasize the value of audiences who can participate in the work. We would caution you against disclosures of frustration or complaint about your research process or findings, though missteps, failures, and complications certainly do happen in research and warrant acknowledgement when we are sharing about our work. Finally, a leading goal for wide delivery of in-progress research is to refresh perspective on the classroom as a temporary scene. Research activity often exceeds the length of a semester or quarter.

Try This Together: Brainstorming Delivery (15 minutes)

With a partner and using your research topic, question, data collected, or project thus far, generate a list of five to ten ways that you might share in-progress work. Be sure to consider different kinds of stakeholders—not just your campus community, but your neighborhood, city, hometown, government, workplace, educational, and community groups. Who is affected by your research, and who might want to know a bit more about it? Who would you like to have in an audience that would help you think differently about your research? Then, consider what forms sharing such in-progress work might take. What are some flexible delivery options that an in-progress project might have that a fully finished project does not?

Attributions

42.

AN INTRODUCTION TO AND STRATEGIES FOR MULTIMODAL COMPOSING

Melanie Gagich

Abstract

This chapter introduces multimodal composing and offers five strategies for creating a multimodal text. The essay begins with a brief review of key terms associated with multimodal composing and provides definitions and examples of the five modes of communication. The first section of the essay also introduces students to the New London Group and offers three reasons why students

should consider multimodal composing an important skill—one that should be learned in a writing class. The second half of the essay offers three pre-drafting and two drafting strategies for multimodal composing. Pre-drafting strategies include urging students to consider their rhetorical situation, analyze other multimodal texts, research textual content, gather visual and aural materials, and evaluate tools needed for creating their text (*Writing Spaces*).

This reading is available below and as a PDF. Additional teaching resources can be found in PDF.

Overview

This chapter introduces multimodal composing and offers five strategies for creating a multimodal text. The essay begins with a brief review of key terms associated with multimodal composing and provides definitions and examples of the five modes of communication. The first section of the essay also introduces students to the New London Group and offers three reasons why students should consider multimodal composing an important skill—one that should be learned in a writing class. The second half of the essay offers three pre-drafting and two drafting strategies for multimodal composing. Pre-drafting strategies include urging students to consider their rhetorical situation, analyze other multimodal texts, research textual content, gather visual and aural materials, and evaluate tools needed for creating their text. A brief discussion of open licenses and Creative Commons licenses is also included. Drafting strategies include citing and attributing various types of texts appropriately and suggesting that students begin drafting with an outline, script, or visual (depending on the project). I conclude the chapter with suggestions for further reading.

When you think about a college writing class, you probably think of pens, paper, word processors, printers, and, of course, essay writing.* However, on the first day of your college writing class, you might read the syllabus and notice that the first assignment asks you to create a “multimodal text.” You may wonder to yourself, “What does multimodal mean?” Perhaps you remember an assignment from high school when your teacher required you to create a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation, and she referred to it as a “multimodal project,” but you were not exactly sure what that meant. Or perhaps you only remember writing five paragraph essays in high school and have never heard or read the word “multimodal.”

As a first-year and upper-level composition instructor who has integrated a multimodal project into my curriculums since 2014, I have encountered many questions and confusion related to multimodal composing, or what is sometimes referred to as “multimodality.” While some students are thrilled to compose something other than an academic essay, others struggle to understand why they are required to create a multimodal text in a writing class. I assure my students that although they may not be familiar with the concept of multimodality, it has a long history in composition (e.g. writing studies). In fact, the “multimodal assignment” has been a fixture in some college writing classrooms for over a decade and continues to be prevalent in many classrooms. In light of the probability that you will be asked to create a multimodal text at some point in your academic and/ or professional career, I wrote this chapter to help you understand and navigate multimodal composing. In the first half of this chapter, I provide brief definitions of terms associated with and explain the importance of multimodal composing. The remainder of the chapter offers strategies for composing a multimodal text with an emphasis on pre-drafting strategies.

What Is a Multimodal Text?

Before moving into a discussion of multimodality and modes of communication, it is important to understand the meaning of the word “text” because it is often only associated with writing (or perhaps the messages you receive or write on your phone). However, when we use the term “text” in composition courses, we often mean it is a piece of communication that can take many forms. For instance, a text is a movie, meme, social media post, essay, website, podcast, and the list goes on. In our daily lives, we encounter, interact with, and consume many types of texts, and it is important to consider how most texts are also multimodal.

Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia L. Selfe, two important scholars in writing studies and early advocates of multimodal composing, define multimodal texts as “texts that exceed the alphabetical and may include still and moving images, animators, color, words, music, and sound” (1). You’ll notice that the examples of “text” listed above are also multimodal, which demonstrates how often we encounter multimodality in our daily lives.

Multimodality is sometimes associated with technology and/or digital writing spaces. For example, when you post an image to Instagram, you use technology (your phone) to snap a picture, an app to edit or modify the image, and a social media platform (Instagram) to share it with others. However, creating a multimodal text does not require the use of digital tools and/or does not need to be shared in online digital spaces to make it "multimodal." To illustrate, when you create a collage and post it on your dorm room door, you use existing printed artifacts such as pictures clipped and pasted (non-digital technologies) from a magazine and share with oth- ers by taping it to your door (a non-digital space). Both examples represent a multimodal text because they include various modes of communication.

The Five Modes of Communication

In the mid-1990s, a group of scholars gathered in New London, New Hampshire and, based on their discussions, wrote the influential article, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," published in 1996. In it, the group advocated for teachers to embrace teaching practices that allow students to draw from five socially and culturally situated modes, or "way[s] of communicating" (Arola, Sheppard, and Ball 1). These modes were linguistic, visual, spatial, gestural, and aural. Yet, scholars such as Claire Lauer, another influential researcher in composition, have argued that the New London Group's definition of modes, while exceedingly important, can be difficult to grasp. In light of this, below I provide brief definitions of each mode as well as examples to help you understand the "mode" in "multimodal."

What Are the Modes of Communication?

The visual mode refers to what an audience can see, such as moving and still images, colors, and alphabetical text size and style. Social media photos (see figure 1) exemplify the visual mode.

Figure 1. Photo of my dog taken from my Facebook page that represents the visual mode.

The linguistic mode refers to alphabetic text or spoken word. Its emphasis is on language and how words are used (verbally or written). A traditional five paragraph essay relies on the linguistic mode; however, this mode is also apparent in some digital texts. Figure 2 shows a student's linguistic text included in their website created to promote game-based language learning.

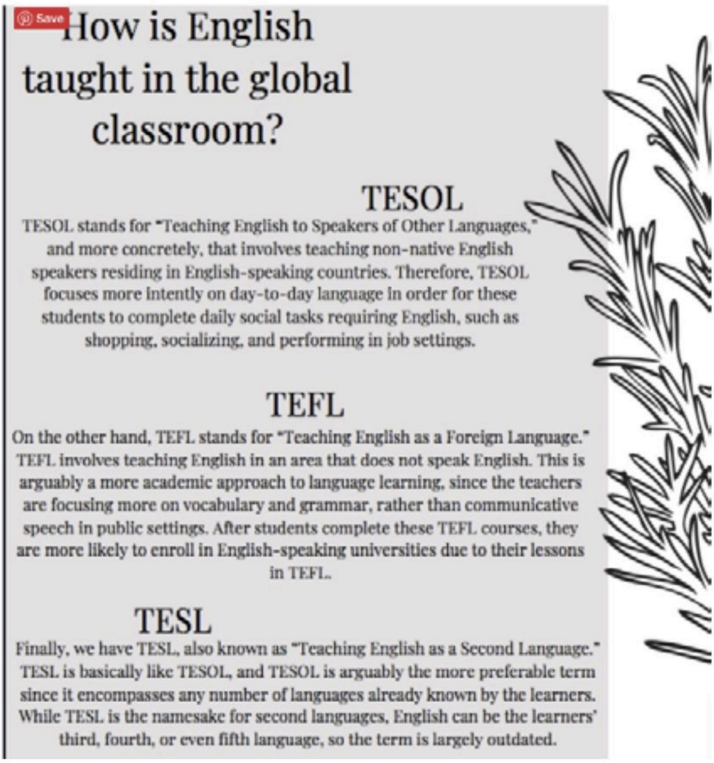

Figure 2. A student's digital text that emphasizes the linguistic mode. Photo shows a Pinterest pin that uses text to briefly explain the differences among TESOL, TEFL, and TESL. Permission to use this image was obtained from the student.

The spatial mode refers to how a text deals with space. This also relates to how other modes are arranged, organized, emphasized, and contrasted in a text. Figure 3, an infographic, is an example of the spatial mode in use because it emphasizes certain percentages and words to achieve its goal.

Figure 3. Infographic emphasizing the spatial mode. The infographic uses different sizes of text and different shapes to emphasize statistics surrounding cancer diagnoses and common types. ("Cancer Infographic" by CDC Global licensed under CC BY 2.0)

The gestural mode refers to gesture and movement. This mode is often apparent in delivery of speeches in the way(s) that speakers move their hands and fix their facial features and in other texts that capture movement such as videos, movies, and television. Figure 4 shows Michelle Obama's gestures at a speech she gave in London.

Figure 4. Picture taken of Michelle Obama while giving a speech that captures the gestural mode. She is standing at a microphone, looking out into the audience, and smiling with her hands clasped against her heart. ("US First Lady, Michelle Obama, speaking at Mulberry School for Girls, London" by DFID licensed under CC BY 2.0)

The aural mode refers to what an audience member can or cannot hear. Music is the most obvious representation of the aural mode, but an absence of sound (silence) is also aural. Examples of texts that emphasize the aural mode include podcasts, music videos, concerts, television series, movies, and radio talk shows. Figure 5 is a screenshot of my student's podcast created to convince teachers to integrate podcasts into their language arts classrooms. A podcast exemplifies the aural mode because of its reliance on sound.

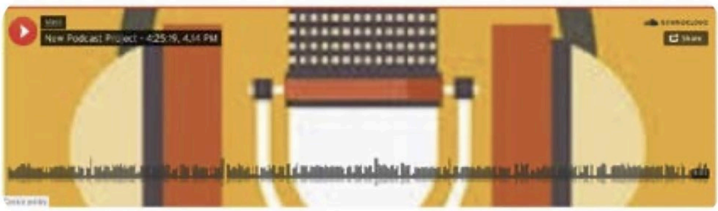

Figure 5 is a screen shot of a student's podcast and shows the audio lines and length of the text, entitled "New Podcast Project." (Permission to use this image was obtained from the student).

A multimodal text combines various modes of communication (hence the combination of the words "multiple" and "mode" in the term "multi- modal"). Cheryl E. Ball and Colin Charlton draw from The New London Group in their argument that "[a]ny combination of modes makes a multimodal text, and all text—every piece of communication a human composes—use more than one mode. Thus, all writing is multimodal" (42). However, in some communicative texts, one mode receives more emphasis than the others. For example, academia and writing teachers have historically favored the linguistic mode, often seen in the form of the written college essay. Yet, when you communicate using an essay, you are actually using three modes of communication: linguistic, spatial, and visual. The words represent the linguistic mode (the emphasized mode), the margins and spacing characterize the spatial, and the visual mode includes elements like font, font size, or the use of bold.

Combining each mode to create a clear communicative essay often involves the writing process (i.e. invention, drafting, and revision), and a thoughtful writer will also consider how the final product does or does not address an audience. The same process is used when creating a less traditional multimodal text. For instance, when creating a text emphasizing the aural mode (e.g. a podcast), you must consider your audience, purpose, and context while also organizing and arranging your ideas and content in a coherent and logical way. This process parallels the traditional writing process. Thus, while a multimodal text might be considered less "academic" by some students and/or instructors, understanding that all writing and all texts are also multimodal demonstrates that learning about multimodality and how to multimodally compose is just as important as learning how to write.

Why Is Multimodal Composing Important?

You might be wondering why you should multimodally compose in a college writing class. In this section, I provide some answers to this question. I explain how multimodal composing assignments help students practice digital literacy skills, offer an opportunity to transfer multimodal composing experiences from home to academic settings, and allow students to learn "real life" composing practices.

Multimodal Assignments Help You Learn Digital Literacy Skills

You have likely been taught that to succeed in the world, you need to become a literate citizen. The common understanding of "literate" or "literacy" is an ability to read and write alphabetic texts. While it is important to have these skills, this definition privileges words and language over the other modes of communication. It also does not allow for assignments that help you practice communicating using multiple literacies, modes of communication, and technologies in various and diverse writing situations.

The New London Group members were some of the first to argue that students should have opportunities to practice and learn multiple literacies in the classroom, while utilizing emerging technologies. This idea continues to be reflected in writing and literacy goals in many first year writing and writing across the curriculum courses. In fact, check out your syllabus; in many colleges and universities there is a goal related to "digital literacy." The 2000s saw the arrival of "digital literacy skills" added to many first year writing program's learning outcomes and include understanding how to react to different writing assignments that require composing practices beyond writing a college essay and learning how to use various technologies to appropriately distribute information. Multimodal assignments offer opportunities for instructors to help you learn these digital literacy skills.

Multimodal Assignments Allow You to Use What You Know

You are likely already sharing and creating multimodal texts online and communicating with a wide range of audiences through social media, which Ryan P. Shepherd argues, requires multimodality. However, in his 2018 study, Shepherd also points out that students struggle to perceive the connections between the digital and multimodal composing they do *outside of school* with the same types of assignments they are asked to complete *in school*. What does this mean? Well, it means you are probably already multimodally composing outside of school but you just didn't know it. Understanding that you are already composing multimodally in many digital spaces will help you transfer that knowledge and experience into your academic assignments. This understanding might also help alleviate any fears or anxiety you may have when confronted with an assignment that disrupts what you think writing should look like. You can take a deep breath and remember that practicing multimodal composing in school connects to the multimodal composing you likely practice outside of school.

Multimodal Assignments Offer Real Skills for the Workforce

Perhaps the most significant reason for learning how to compose multimodally is that it provides "real-life" skills that can help prepare students for careers. The United States continues to experience a "digital age" where employees are expected to have an understanding of how to use technology and communicate in various ways for various purposes. Takayoshi and Selfe argue that "[w]hatever profession students hope to enter in the 21st century . . . they can expect to read and be asked to help compose multi- modal texts of various kinds . . ." (3). Additionally, professionals are also using the benefits of digital tools and multimodal composing to promote themselves, their interests, research, or all three. Learning how to create a multimodal text will prepare you for the workforce by allowing you to embrace the skills you already have and learn how to target specific audiences for specific reasons using various modes of communication.

How Do I Create a Multimodal Text?

Now that you know what a multimodal text is and why it is important to learn how to create them, it makes sense to discuss strategies for composing a multimodal text. As with writing, multimodal composing is a process and should not only emphasize the final result. Therefore, the first three strategies listed below are pre-drafting activities.

1. Determine your rhetorical situation.
2. Review and analyze other multimodal texts.
3. Gather content, media, and tools.
4. Cite and attribute information appropriately.
5. Begin drafting your text.

While I often ask my students to attend to each strategy in the order given, your process might change based on the assignment and/or instructor expectations.

Determine Your Rhetorical Situation

When brainstorming your rhetorical situation, you should consider the purpose of your text (the *message*), who you want to read and interact with your text (*the audience*, your relationship to the message and audience (*the* *author*), the type of text you want to create (*the genre*), and where you want to distribute it (*the medium*. Descriptions of each of the five components of the rhetorical situation are offered below.

The Message

The message relates to your purpose, and you might ask yourself, what am I trying to accomplish? You should try to make the message as clear and specific as possible. Let's say you want to create a website focused on donating to charity. An unclear message might be "getting more people in the United States to donate to charities." A clearer message is "convincing college freshmen at my university to donate to the ASPCA" because the audience and purpose are specific rather than broad.

The Audience

There are two types of audiences. An intended audience, who you target in your message, and an unintentional audience, who may stumble upon your text. When determining your message, you want to consider the beliefs, values, and demographics of your intended audience as well as the likelihood that unintentional audiences will interact with your text. Using the example above, college freshmen at your university are the intended audience, and teachers, parents, and/or students from other universities rep- resent unintentional audience members. It might be helpful to approach audience using the concept of "discourse communities," or "a group of people, members of a community, who share a common interest and who use the same language, or discourse, as they talk and write about that interest" (National Council of Teachers of English). You can read more about discourse communities in Dan Melzer's essay, "You'll Never Write Alone Again: Understanding Discourse Communities" found in this volume of *Writing Spaces*.

The Author

You are the author and should consider your relationship to the message and audience. As an author, you bring explicit (obvious) and/or implicit (not obvious) biases to your message, so it is important to recognize how these might affect it and your audience. Also, you may be targeting an audience you are familiar with (perhaps you are also a college freshman) or not (perhaps you are a graduate student). It is important to think about how your familiarity might affect your message.

The Genre

Genre is a tricky term and can mean different things to different scholars, teachers, and students (Dirk 250). In the context of multimodal composing, genre refers to a type of text that has genre conventions, or audience expectations. For example, if I am creating a website (the genre), an audience would expect the following conventions: an easy-to-navigate toolbar, functional tabs, hyperlinks, and images. Yet, when thinking about genre, it is more useful to think specifically. If I am creating a website for horror film fans (the specific genre), then the audience would expect the following (more specific) genre conventions: references, images, and sounds associated with horror films, directors, actors, actresses, monsters, and villains. They would also expect color and font choices to align with the genre—it is likely that the color baby blue would not be well-received.

The Medium

While genre is the type of text you want to create, the medium refers to where you will distribute it. Classic media (plural for medium) includes distribution via radio, newspapers, magazines, and television; however, new media is defined by a text's online distribution. Importantly, medium refers to where you will distribute your text but not how. The how refers to the technology tools you'll use to create the text and possibly to distribute it. For example, to create a podcast, you might use your smartphone (a tool) to record, a free sound editor like Audacity (another tool) to edit it, and Soundcloud (a tool *and* the medium) to distribute it.

Review and Analyze Other Multimodal Texts

Now that you have brainstormed your rhetorical situation and determined the type of text you want to create, it is time to begin finding other texts representative of your topic and genre. In their textbook, *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects*, Arola, Sheppard, and Ball argue that "[o]ne of the best ways to begin thinking about a multimodal project is to see *what* has already been said about a topic you are interested in . . . as well as *how* other authors have designed their texts on that topic . . . " (40). This is excellent advice. I suggest that you find at least one text you think is an exceptional example and one text you feel is lacking in some way. After you find these texts, you can conduct a brief analysis by responding to the following questions:

1. What is the author's message?
2. Who are they addressing? How can you tell?
3. What type of text did they create? What genre conventions do you see?
4. How was the text distributed? In what ways does it relate to the target audience?
5. What modes of communication are they using? Which are they emphasizing? Do these decisions support the message and/or appropriately target their audience?
6. What do you like about the multimodal text?
7. What, in your opinion, needs work?

If you answer these questions, you have given yourself important feedback to consider for your own work.

Gather Content, Media, and Tools

Once you have determined your rhetorical situation and examined other multimodal texts, you should begin gathering information and materials. I have categorized this process into three components: content, visual and aural materials, and technology tools.

Conduct Content Research

A multimodal text should include content (key pieces of information that support your message), which means you will need to conduct some research. The extent of the research depends on the type of assignment; some instructors might want your multimodal text to include scholarly research while others might not. Therefore, be sure to read the assignment closely and then conduct the necessary research. For example, my student created a website and videos discussing the similarities between American music and K-pop (see figure 6). Her content research includes a scholarly article from the journal *World Englishes* and a popular article from *Billboard.com*.

Figure 6. A screen shot of a student's video that illustrates her use of scholarly content. Video shows an animation of a teacher standing at a chalkboard. On the chalkboard, there is text explaining the musical influences on Post-Choson-Dynasty Korea. (Permission to use this image was obtained from the student).

Collect Visual and Aural Materials

In addition to textual information, you should also collect images, sounds, videos, animations, memes, etc. you want to include in your multimodal text. For instance, figure 6 demonstrates some of the pre-draft materials my student collected: openly licensed images of a teacher and chalkboard, a video they created using Animator, and K-Pop music to play on a loop.

Explore Openly Licensed Materials

When searching for visual and aural materials, you want to consider using openly licensed materials. According to *Yearofopen.org*, open licenses are “a set of conditions applied to an original work that grant permission for anyone to make use of that work as long as they follow the conditions of the license” (“What are Open Licenses”). A well-known and commonly used example of an open license are Creative Commons licenses, identified by CC. Creative Commons licenses provide the creator or author with a copyright, ensuring that they receive credit for their work, while also al- lowing “others to copy, distribute, and make uses of their work – at least non-commercially” (“About the Licenses”). Essentially, if a work has one of the four basic creative commons licenses (see figure 7), then a creator/ author can use the licensed item in their own creative texts.

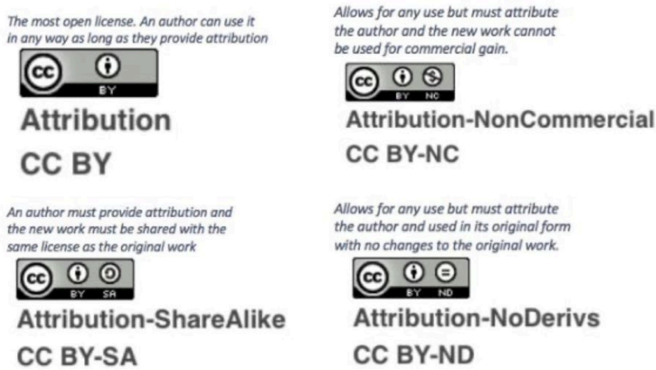

Figure 7. The four basic Creative Commons licenses including explanations for each. (Image was created by the author using "About Licenses" by Creative Commons licensed under CC BY 4.0)

There are various websites such as CC Search, Free Music Archive (FMA), or Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) where you can find openly licensed work. You may also set filters on Flickr or Google Images to locate openly licensed work.

Collect and Evaluate Technology Tools

It is important to collect and evaluate the technology tools you need to create your multimodal text prior to drafting it. As stated previously, the technology tool helps you create the final text and might also help you distribute it. The easiest way to determine the technology tools that you need is to create a list of all of the features you want to include in your text. Once you create the list, research where to find the tools either online or at your university. Be aware that some tools may not be free (although they may come with a free trial period), but you can use software available on your computer or university computers such as iMovie or Windows Movie Maker. Or you can find freeware, software available for free online, such as Audacity (for sound editing), Canva (for infographic and/or image creation), or Blender (for video creation). Once you have created your list and found some tools, spend some time testing each one while keeping track of which is the most user-friendly and helps you achieve your composing goals.

Citing and Attributing Your Content

After researching content and collecting materials, think about how you will give rhetorically appropriate credit to authors or organizations whose work you have referenced or included. For instance, if you create a video, you should provide credits at the end rather than a Works Cited page, or if you design a website, you should include hyperlinks to outside sources rather than MLA in-text citations because this makes more sense, given the genre. For multimodal texts that rely on the aural mode (e.g. podcasts), you can use verbal attributions, or verbalize necessary information. When deciding what information is necessary, think about what you can include to help your audience locate your text, such as author, title, and website. For example, the phrase, "*According to Mandi Goodsett, in her PowerPoint 'Creative Commons Licenses' found on the library website, a student has control over their online presence*," offers the audience key information to help them find the source.

When citing openly licensed images, videos, sounds, animations, screenshots, etc., it is important to provide an attribution. According to the CC Wiki, an appropriate attribution should include the title, author, source (hyperlinked to the original website), and license (hyperlinked to the license information). Figure 8 represents example of an inappropriate attribution and figure 9 an ideal one.

Figure 8. An example of an inappropriate attribution that lacks title, clear author, source link, and license. (Image was created by the author using "Creative Commons Licensing" by Mandi Goodsett licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Figure 9. An example of an ideal attribution, which includes a hyperlinked title for the image, a clear author name, and license information that is also hyperlinked. (Image was created by the author using "Creative Commons Licensing" by Mandi Goodsett licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Begin Drafting Your Text

Drafting your text should include outlining or mapping your project. This could take the form of writing all of the text you want to include in an outline if you have a word-heavy multimodal text like a website, drawing your design if you are creating a poster or commercial, or writing a script if you are creating a podcast or video. Of course, you can combine any of these outlining methods or come up with your own, but thinking about what you want to do before you do it will make your final text much stronger and coherent.

Final Remarks and Finding More Information

The primary purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to multimodal composing and offer some strategies to help you create a multimodal text. Yet, just like with traditional writing, multimodal composing is a process, and while

I provided three pre-drafting strategies, I did not offer much in the way of guidance for drafting your final product. Therefore, I would like to conclude by offering two excellent resources:

- Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackelford's *Writing Spaces* volume 2 chapter, "Beyond Black on White: Document Design and For- matting in the Writing Classroom" discusses visual design, which can help you create your final text.
- Arola, Sheppard, and Ball's commercial textbook, *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* (first and second editions) offers detailed advice for making your multimodal text.

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Attributions

43.

WRITING MULTIMODALLY

Kate L. Pantelides and Erica M. Stone

A **multimodal text** is sometimes referred to as something that incorporates modes beyond the textual, but in truth there aren't ever really non-multimodal compositions. There are simply compositions in which we take the multimodal components for granted. For instance, consider a writing project composed in Calibri font size 10 on 8 1/2 x 11 white print paper, created through a word processing program such as Microsoft Word. Although we sometimes aren't attentive to the multimodal components of this text, because they're default, there are multiple modes that animate this text: the page is visually designed, there are textual components, there are spatial components, and there are even gestural components because we can touch and feel the printed text.

Some scholars identify five different modes: Linguistic, Visual, Aural, Spatial, and Gestural. You might take a moment to think about examples of each and how they apply to the compositions in your midst.

However, there are different ways to conceive of multimodality. For instance Anne Wysocki (building on Communication scholar Gunther Kress) questions the frequent binary we use that divides image and text. To complicate this understanding, Wysocki invites us to examine the phrase "awaywithwords." What do you see when you consider this phrase? A way with words? Away with words? Away with-words? Wysocki makes this point to remind us that not too long ago spacing in written text was very different. In fact, there weren't spaces between many words, and people read differently (and perhaps thought and acted differently?) because of this. The space between words and images helps define them as words or images. Ultimately, she suggests that space is focal to design and communication, and it's worth questioning the sometimes rigid roles we assign to image and text, and other modes for that matter.

In his book *The New Analog: Listening and Reconnecting in a Digital World* (a great read for anyone obsessed with music and sound!), Damon Krukowski usefully disrupts another binary that we often assign to multimodal texts: digital vs. analog. He chronicles the way that sound has been produced over time, reminding us that much of what we attribute to digital is in fact analog.

Sometimes we talk about writing "with technology" and writing without, as if that were possible. Denis Baron's fascinating history of writing technology, *A Better Pencil*, offers useful historical context about writing technologies, noting that writing itself is a technology, something created. And from the invention of writing technologies, folks were worried! Plato famously noted that writing will allow people to be dishonest, that because you won't have to see someone speaking or shake their hand to know if they're telling the truth, democracy will suffer. Baron notes in his book how the pencil was a particularly disruptive technology, one perfected by none other than Henry David Thoreau (and his family), someone we often associate with nature rather than technology.

It is important to remember that whenever we compose we are doing so multimodally. As you read and compose, we invite you to be aware of this multimodality and make rhetorical choices that demonstrate awareness of the constructed, multimodal nature of our communication practices.

44.

UNDERSTANDING VISUAL RHETORIC

Jenae Cohn

Abstract

This article, "Understanding Visual Rhetoric," by Jenae Cohn comes from Writing Spaces. The article explores how visuals can dramatically impact our understanding of a rhetorical situation. In a writing class, students do not always think that they will need to be attentive to visuals, but visual information can be a critical component to understanding and analyzing the rhetorical impacts of a multimodal text.

This chapter gives examples of what visual rhetoric looks like in everyday situations, unpacking how seemingly mundane images like a food picture on social media or a menu at a restaurant, can have a persuasive impact on the viewer. The chapter then offers students some terms to use when describing visuals in a variety of situations.

Read the text below or as a PDF. Additional teaching resources can be found in PDF.

Introduction

It's Friday night and you're hungry.* So, you corral some friends and you all decide that you'd like to go out to eat somewhere new. You hop online to explore your options, and, in the process, you find a wealth of information from menus and visitor reviews to hours and locations. But there's one factor that has an especially strong influence on your choice: the pictures of the food.

Figure 1. A cheeseburger is held in a close-up shot. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

Figure 2. A hamburger and fries meal at Shake Shack in Palo Alto, California. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

You check out a review page for a hamburger joint and find yourself drooling over a close-up shot of a juicy burger with a slice of cheese oozing over the edge (see figure 1). You click to the next shot and see a cascade of golden french fries on a tray with an ombre-tinted iced tea and lemonade (see figure 2). You click one more time and find yet another delectable shot: a frosty milkshake with a mountain of whipped cream on top. You're feeling increasingly convinced that this restaurant is where you'll suggest that you and your friends go out to eat.

You decide to click through to see one more picture, expecting to see yet another culinary delight (see figure 3). But this next photo surprises you: it's a picture of someone's tray of food, but it's dimly lit and a little hard to tell what's there. The hamburger looks squished and flat, the meat greasy and paltry. The french fries curled up next to the burger look a bit dried out. There's a mysterious puddle of sauce in a bowl next to the plate burger, and it's not totally clear what's in it. The meal suddenly doesn't look so appetizing after all.

Figure 3. A poorly lit, squished hamburger and fries. Photo by Jenae Cohn.

You find yourself confused. All of these pictures are supposedly of food at the same restaurant, but the pictures look so different from each other. Knowing that the images may not accurately reflect the reality of the restaurant experience, you feel angry and misled: how can you possibly know which photos capture the "real" experience at the restaurant? Why trust any photos of restaurant food at all?

The fact of the matter is that you can't know *exactly* what your restauranting experience will be like when you walk in the door of a new place. But the images clearly had a persuasive impact on you as a decision-maker: the contrast between the appetizing images and the unappetizing photos made you question the quality and consistency of the restaurant's food, a contrast that made you wonder whether the restaurant would be the kind of place where you'd like to visit.

The point here is those photos of the food you found at the restaurant impacted your decision-making, which makes them a perfect example of visual rhetoric in action. Visual rhetoric refers to any communicative momment where visuals (photographs, illustrations, cartoons, maps, diagrams, etc.) contribute to making meaning and displaying information. You're in a writing class right now (which is probably why you're reading this essay and wondering what hamburgers have to do with anything), and you may think of writing mostly as words on the page. However, as more writers publish and distribute their work online, the more readers expect to find that information may be communicated in multiple modes, from text to visuals and audio. As writing and rhetoric scholar Carolyn Handa puts it,

> rhetoric's association with the written word is arbitrary, a by-product of print culture rather than the epistemological limits of rhetoric itself. We use rhetoric to help us think more clearly, write more elegantly, design more logically. Rhetoric works both to scaffold our ideas for clearer understanding and to structure our critical examinations of both visual and verbal objects. (2)

What Handa means by "the epistemological limits of rhetoric itself" (and yes, that is a mouthful!) is that, when we think of making meaning, build- ing arguments, and reaching our target audiences, we are not limited to words as a tool. In fact, if we limit ourselves to words in our arguments, we may not successfully reach our audiences at all. Some audiences need visuals to think through an idea, and using graphs and diagrams can express some ideas *more* clearly than text can. So, we have to take visuals into account as part of understanding communication.

You may be thinking that this all sounds good, but what about images that are just pretty for the sake of being pretty? Well, those exist too, but we call those "art." A picture of a hamburger framed in an art museum does not exist to market hamburgers (though it might make you hungry!). However, a picture of a hamburger on an Instagram feed for a particular restaurant exists as a way to encourage visitors to come and dine at the restaurant. As composition scholar and teacher Kristen Welch describes it: "visual rhetoric is a focus on the practical, relevant, and functional as op- posed to an aesthetic analysis or use of visual elements for beauty" (256). It is important to recognize when a visual exists to help us appreciate beauty (and we may even appreciate the beauty of a picture of a hamburger on an Instagram feed), but the context in which we see visuals matters an awful lot in terms of how we analyze and understand their impacts on us as viewers.

Our example of finding food photos from a restaurant online exemplifies just how accessible visual rhetoric really is in our everyday lives. Clearly, the lighting, composition, and angle of the image clearly makes a big difference in our reaction to the image and potentially our willingness to take action and respond to the image (either by going to the restaurant or not). After reading through the opening story, you may have thought of lots of other ways that you encounter other pictures of food online. On social media, for example, a lot of users post images of food they've cooked or eaten as a way to share eating experiences. Because of how consumer interests are driven by the platforms they use to access information, visuals are more important than ever for people to make decisions or become attracted to visiting particular spaces. But visual rhetoric is not just about persuading someone to like something or not. Visual rhetoric can also be used to help people understand a concept, break down an idea, or access important pieces of information.

We'll explore a few more examples of what visual rhetoric can look like in a few other situations where the visuals may not just be persuasive, but they may offer necessary guidance or instruction for the viewer. After that, this chapter will offer you some advice on how you might analyze visuals in your future writing classes so that you, too, can interpret the visuals you encounter in rhetorical situations.

Why Do Visuals Matter?

Let's think back to the restaurant example one more time. You've picked a restaurant for your Friday night dinner and now you're with your friends and are seated at the dining table. A waiter hands you a menu and guess what? You're seeing yet another example of visual rhetoric in action. This particular menu comes from a real restaurant, called Oren's Hummus, which has locations around the San Francisco Bay Area in California (see figure 4).

Figure 4. An image of a menu for Oren's Hummus with three columns containing various menu items. Menu image courtesy of Mistie Cohen.

This restaurant menu doesn't have pictures on it, but it makes visual choices that may impact which food items you decide to order. For example, separating certain food items under headers, like "Hummus Bowls" and "Grilled Entrees" gives you some quick visual information about what items you can expect to find in those sections. Even more noticeably, the section titled "Dips & Sides" is separated from the other menu items by a green box. While the words "Dips & Sides" may have helped us understand that the items in that section would be smaller-sized than the menu items outside the green box, the use of the green box is a rhetorical tool; it makes it really obvious to the restaurant goer that if they order an item from the Dips & Sides section, it's going to be smaller than the items that are not inside the green box.

Think about this particular restaurant's context even more: the restaurant advertises its "hummus," a Mediterranean dip made out of garbanzo beans, in its name, but for many visitors, they may not have experienced eating hummus in the way that this restaurant serves it. For many diners, they may have experienced hummus as a dip or side rather than as a main course. However, because "Hummus Bowls" appear on the menu separately from the Dips & Sides, it's clear that the hummus bowls can actually be eaten as a main dish rather than as a side dish. This is a new situation, a subversion of expectations, for many restaurant-goers, so the menu has to do some visual work to help the visitor understand what to expect from the food they order.

Do you see how many words it took me to explain how the Dips & Sides section differs from the other menu sections? If you were a hungry diner, would you want to take the time to listen to all of that or read that long explanation? Probably not. That's why the document design on the menu is so important: it aligns our expectations quickly, simply, and clearly. Document design is yet another example of visual rhetoric in action, as it persuades us to make particular choices (in this case, about what we order). To learn more about components of document design in particular, you may want to look to another essay in the *Writing Spaces* series, called "Beyond Black on White: Document Design and Formatting in the Writ- ing Classroom" by Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackleford. They make the important case that, "Good document design integrates the words on the page with appropriate imagery to fully illustrate your meaning," a sentiment that reflects exactly what we saw happen with the menu (333).

The menu also includes some symbols to indicate which menu items may adhere to particular dietary needs, a piece of visual information that may be critical to those with allergies or sensitivities. Next to the descriptions of particular menu items, the letters "gf" and "v" indicate which items on the menu are "gluten free" (items that don't contain binding proteins found in wheat and other grains) or "vegan" (items that don't contain animal products, like meat or dairy); a key for these restrictions is in the bottom right-hand corner of the menu for visitors to reference if they are seeking out those indications.

Some menus will indicate these dietary restrictions using visual symbols instead; for example, other menus may include a green leaf icon next to particular items to indicate that the menu item is vegetarian or a brown-colored “G” inside a circle often indicates that the menu item is gluten-free. While you, as a reader, may have some critiques of how clearly the Oren’s Hummus menu makes these dietary restrictions clear, the point is that the visual indicators are there to guide visitors in critical ways.

You may also notice that, on the menu, the two biggest visual items are the restaurant’s logo and slogan (“Rip, Scoop, Eat!”) and the inclusion of “Gluten Free Pita” on its menu. These largest items show the restaurant’s priorities: by making its slogan and name large, the menu reminds you of its branding, while also offering you an instruction for enjoying its signature dishes: to rip a piece of pita, scoop the pita into dip, and eat it! Making the words “Gluten Free Pita” among the largest on the menu also suggests that the restaurant aims to reach a diversity of diners, even those who may be sensitive to or avoiding eating wheat-based products. The restaurant’s priorities are clear: to educate unfamiliar hummus-eaters with the process and experience of eating hummus while also convincing diners that, regardless of their dietary restrictions, there will likely be something at the restaurant that the diner will enjoy.

The point of all this analysis of the Oren’s Hummus menu is that choices in document text, color, image, and spacing matter in order to help you make choices, big and small. As you can see, visuals play a tremendous role in a) how we make decisions, b) how we receive instructions, and c) how we understand information. But let’s get a little bit more fine-grained: what elements of visual design exactly can help make certain ideas clearer than others? How do we name and define the persuasive elements of a visual? Let's look to some elements of visual design to answer those questions.

Elements of Visual Design: Line, Color, Shape, Size, Space, Value, Texture

The elements of visual design are one way to help us understand more clearly why a visual has a particular kind of effect on its viewer. The elements of visual design may not necessarily help us understand purpose or intent, but they can help us break down different component parts of images so that we can start to puzzle out what an image might do for us as viewers and readers. We, naturally, should understand these elements in their particular contexts, and the impacts of these elements will likely differ depending on where and how we're viewing a particular image. With that said, beginning to name what we notice is one important step to gathering more information about images so that we can articulate their meaning more clearly.

Here are six elements of visual design you may want to consider in order to understand how an image is communicating a particular idea.

Line

Lines are visual markers that are often used to divide different sections of an image or document into multiple parts. Lines can create order in something disorderly, offering the eyes a sense of where to go or how to differentiate between different elements. Many artists and graphic designers often rely on grids of lines to help them determine where to place particular elements in a picture or a graphic to ensure that the viewer can understand where to focus their attention or where to differentiate one piece of information from another (see figure 5).

Figure 5. The edge of an orange fence casts a shadow on the sidewalk.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about line in the following ways:

- What role is the line playing in helping me understand what to emphasize? What to deemphasize?
- What role is the line playing in connecting one part of the image with the other? What relationships between the parts of the image are at play?
- What kind of pattern do I see in this image or

diagram? How does the pattern help shape my understanding of the image, graph, or shape?

Color

Color can help evoke emotions in the viewer while also helping the viewer distinguish what's important or what should be emphasized. In fact, many designers use resources like color wheels to help them determine what kinds of color combinations complement each other and what kinds of color combinations offer contrast (see figure 6). It is generally agreed upon that particular colors evoke different emotions than others; for example, colors like orange and red tend to convey warmth or passion while colors like blue and purple tend to convey coolness or calm.

However, some colors have deep cultural associations. For example, in China, the color red tends to signify good luck, joy, and happiness; that's why gifts given at Chinese New Year's tend to be in red envelopes and also why wedding dresses in China are often red-colored. In Western cultures, on the other hand, red can more often signify danger or caution. In the United States, we may think of red as the color for a stop sign, for example.

Lots of resources online exist to help designers keep particular cultural associations with color in mind, especially in sensitive situations! For example, while wearing black to a funeral in the United States would be conventional and respectful, it would actually be considered quite odd to wear black to a funeral in Cambodia, where the color white is much more often worn for events of mourning.

You may not be able to account for all of the different situations where colors may signify different things to different viewers, but as a reader and composer, you will want to be attentive to how and where color is used, even if the possibilities for interpretation may vary.

Figure 6. An abstract pattern of rectangles in a variety of muted earth tones, ranging from oranges to greens, blues, and browns.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about color in the following ways:

- What is color (or the lack of color if the visual is black-and-white) emphasizing here? What is de-emphasized
- Given my understanding of color, what emotions does the color evoke for me? What do the colors in the image remind me of?
- How might this visual change if the color scheme was inverted? How would the impact on the viewer be altered?

Shape

All visuals contain elements that take on different *shapes* (see figure 7). We probably learned about shapes at some point when we were children, especially if we played with toy blocks. Have you ever seen toy blocks in the shapes of squares, triangles, and circles? If so, congratulations, you've had exposure to the three basic shape types that exist in the world!

Many other shapes build off of these three fundamental shape types. For example, in the natural world, we may easily recognize shapes like clouds, trees, and water droplets. Similarly, certain man-made objects take on particular meanings through their shapes alone. For example, lightbulbs are shapes that typically symbolize new or "bright" ideas, while the shape of a rocket or airplane often signifies innovation or the accomplishment of a goal.

Shapes that come from the real world—like the clouds and trees or the light bulbs and rocket ships—tend to be culturally situated in the same way that colors can have different cultural associations. Yet as readers of visuals, we can analyze the roles that shapes play based on our own understanding of the audience's needs and purposes when accessing the visual.

Figure 7. A pattern of circles, squares, and triangles in bright colors contrasted on an asphalt surface.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about shapes in the following ways:

- What does this shape typically signify? Where have I seen this kind of shape before?
- Given my understanding of this shape, what emotions does the shape evoke for me?
- What might the shape be drawing attention to?

Size

In visuals, different elements may be large while other elements may be small. Typically, the elements that are larger sizes than other elements are of greater importance than the elements that are smaller sizes. But larger things are not always more valuable; the other elements in the visual may visually draw attention to smaller-sized items so that we don't lose sight of the smaller parts of the visual entirely. Large images next to small images may also be used to help us compare two parts so that we can see how they are related to each other (see figure 8).

Figure 8. A row of three giraffes, ranging from a small giraffe to a larger one, line up outside of a doorway.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about size in the following ways:

- Which elements in the visual are larger than the other elements?

- How do the sizes of different elements in the visual impact your understanding of what's in the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing the different sizes in the visual? Do any of the sizes of the elements surprise you? Why or why not?

Space

In between or around the elements in a particular visual, there is always some empty space. Some designers call this "white space" or "neutral space." Space is critical to help distinguish between the different elements in a visual. Without space, particular elements in the visual may be hard to distinguish or may have the effect that the visual is "busy" and, therefore, hard to read and understand.

Even in a document that is mostly text, space signifies meaning. For example, when you split paragraphs into their individual units, the space before and after the paragraph indicates that one thought is about to begin while another thought ends. Similarly, in other kinds of visuals, space might help a certain element stand out from other parts or it might help you understand where one part of the image begins and another part ends (see figure 9).

Figure 9. Two red apples are clustered in one corner of a wooden table, drawing attention to the fruit in an open space.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about space in the following ways:

- How much "white space" or "neutral space" is there in the visual? Is this space evenly distributed or are the spaces uneven?
- What effect does the space in this visual have? How does the space break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing the space in the visual?

Value

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a particular element in a visual. For example, think of a visual that may use different shades of the color blue; the elements that are darker blue than the lighter blue elements convey that the darker blue elements have greater *value* than the lighter blue elements. Just as something that is larger in size may signify greater importance than something that is smaller in size, something that is darker in color tends to signify greater value than something that is lighter in color.

Value is a comparative function by default; a dark color by itself may not mean anything unless a lighter color is present by comparison. Similarly, a "dark" visual may not necessarily have greater value than a "light" visual; however, if there are both dark and light elements in a particular visual, those shades signify differing levels of importance or attention in the visual itself. Sometimes, the dark elements may be meant to obscure information and make the lighter elements more visible. At other times, darker shades of a particular color may draw more attention to them than lighter shades of a color (see figure 10).

Figure 10. Light illuminates a dirt pathway in a forest; the trees around the path- way are shaded.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about value in the following ways:

- How do different values create importance? Depth? What is emphasized?
- What effect does value in this visual have? How does value break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing different values of visual depth in this visual?

Texture

We may think of texture primarily from a tactile perspective initially. When we touch different objects, we tend to notice texture right away: silk tend to be smooth to the touch while burlap tends to be rough and bumpy. But we can look at a picture and detect different surfaces just by the look of it too, and the conveyance of those textures may also impact our orientation and understanding of what the image conveys. For example, a visual that includes lots of tiny dots may convey a bumpy texture while a visual that includes lots of wavy lines and wavy images may convey a smoother or more "watery" texture. Textures might be used to evoke particular sensations in the viewer, but they may also be used to distinguish one visual element from another (see figure 11).

Figure 11. A craggy-textured rock is on the rippled sandy shore of a beach.

When you look at a visual, consider asking questions about texture in the following ways:

- What kinds of textures do I see in this visual? Are textures clearly implied or does the visual just include one kind of texture?
- What effect does texture (or the lack of texture) have on understanding what I should focus on in this image? How does texture break up or distinguish different elements of the visual?
- What is your reaction to seeing different textures in this visual?

Concluding Thoughts

Once we start noticing the role that visuals play all around us, we gain a greater awareness of the range of strategies that communicators use to get our attention. This chapter is just a start in helping you to recognize some examples of visual rhetoric and the roles that visuals can play to help make meaning and persuade others. There is a lot more to learn about designing and making your own visuals. But just as reading will help you become a better writer, viewing and training your eye to recognize what's happening in images will help you to become a better designer.

As you look ahead to thinking capaciously about the strategies you might use to employ images and other media in your writing, bear in mind that not all of your readers will have equal access to all of the communicative strategies you're employing. For visuals in particular, you may have readers who are visually impaired or blind and may not be able to understand or recognize the role that your images are playing in your text. However, as a writer, there are some strategies you can use to help your reader appreciate your use of visuals even if they are not able to see images in the same way that you can. Captions (as you saw included in this chapter) and alternative text (for Web-based images) are ways that you, as a writer, can describe what's happening in a picture so that even if a reader cannot see the image, they can get a sense of what the picture might look like and what effect the picture is having on the document itself.

A picture is often worth a thousand words because it implies so much and can give us a lot of information quickly. Seeing may not always be believing, but visual rhetoric can be a pretty powerful way to help people understand an idea differently than they may have otherwise.

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visual, **rhetoric**, multimodal, **multimodality**, image

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Attributions

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BEYOND BLACK ON WHITE: DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackelford

Abstract

In their essay in *Writing Spaces*, Michael J. Klein and Kristi L. Shackelford note the importance not just of what your composition says, but how it's designed. Both have a significant impression on an audience and their potential

uptake of or engagement with your ideas. Their overview of design choices and elements offers a quick, accessible crash course in design that applies across the curriculum and modes of composition.

Read the text below or as a PDF. Additional teaching resources can be found in PDF.

You've received your first assignment in a college writing course. You've created an outline, done the necessary research, and written a first draft of your paper. Now it's time for you to revise your work so you can submit the paper. However, writing a paper for a course involves more than simply generating content and turning it into your instructor. Equally important as the words you write is how the appearance of your document influences the way readers interpret your ideas.

Most people think of design as the arrangement of images on the page. This is only half true: Graphics can convey concepts that you can't express in writing. If you were writing an article about an oil spill and the damage it caused, one powerful photograph could make your point more persuasively than pages of writing. Good document design integrates the words on the page with appropriate imagery to fully illustrate your meaning. An image of the Deep Horizon oil spill won't have the same impact if the image isn't coupled with a sentence about the scope of the spill.

An often-overlooked element of design is the visual treatment of text itself. In this definition of text, text does not include your word choice or the structure of your argument. Instead, it refers to the look of the words on the page. Are all the fonts the same? Are key ideas written in a text larger than other text? Are some words in bold? All of these choices influence the way your document looks and is perceived by your readers. Depending on the type of paper your instructor has assigned and the preparation rules or style guide required, subtle variations in text might be your only design option.

In a typical first year writing course, you'll be focusing—of course—on writing. If the intent of writing is to communicate an idea, the way you present your writing is also important. You can greatly improve a standard research paper on climate change with the addition of an image showing differences in ice caps over a period of years. You can strengthen data supporting your position in an opinion paper if you present it in a graph rather than a narrative format. However, include graphics in written assignments with care: they should supple- ment, not replace, your writing. When you are creating, don't think of design features as only images. Remember that visual design applies to the style of the text you use to convey ideas. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the use of text as a design element.

What You Should Know about Design Choices and Elements

You can talk about design in a multitude of ways. What some designers call white space, for example, others call negative space. In both cases, they are referring to areas of a page free from text or objects, such as the white space that makes up the margins around the text of this paragraph. A designer may talk about the use of alignment in a design, while someone else will describe how textual elements "line up" on a page. All theories and methods of design include the same basic ideas, just expressed in different terms. The names of elements on a page are much less important than their function. The definitions below will help you understand the way we use these terms.

Text and Type

Typeface refers to the look of your text. It typically includes the font family (e.g., Times New Roman), the type size (e.g., 12 point) and type emphasis (e.g., bold). Spacing is the amount of space around a line of text within a document. The amount of space between lines of text is called leading (pronounced *led*) or line spacing. Leading is typically the size of the font plus two points. For example, standard leading for 12-point type is 14 points, indicated as 12/14 point; this paragraph uses 11 point Adobe Garamond Pro with 13.2 point lead- ing. Increasing the amount of leading, or size of line spacing, can in- crease readability. Large amounts of text are often set with a leading of twice the text (12/24 point), also called double-spacing.

Images

The visual elements of a design range from simple boxes to the use of color photographs. Designers often use the term “images” to refer to the wide range of visual elements available—photographs, line drawings, technical illustrations, graphs, charts, and so on. Not all images are appropriate for all uses. A color photo of the beach, for instance, may have more persuasive power than a black-and-white drawing because the photograph evokes a more complete and personal reaction. A technical illustration that allows a reader to see the inside of a device can demonstrate the proper assembly of equipment in more detail than an actual photograph. In some cases, though, images can distract from the meaning of your text. You should not include random clip art of a tree, for example, to supplement a paper on the importance of environ- mental sustainability. In contrast, you may strengthen your position on environmental sustainability with a graph showing the cumulative effects of non-recycled materials.

Design Elements

Like the combination of text and images, the integration of four key design elements—Contrast, Repetition, Alignment and Proximity— gives a design power. You can remember these elements by the acronym CRAP. Don't let the name influence you, though—following these principles is one of the best ways to ensure your document looks its best. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate among these concepts because they influence each other.

Contrast

Contrast refers to the visual differences in elements on a page. These differences highlight the significance of the individual items, as well as draw the reader's attention to different areas of a page. In a magazine layout, for example, the largest photograph is more noticeable because of its larger size in comparison to others on a spread. Color in a design can also provide noticeable contrast.

In text, you see contrast through different uses of formatting options. This might include choosing different typefaces to visually separate headings from your main text. Contrast may also be visible in the differing sizes or emphasis applied to a text. If you apply bold formatting to keywords in your document, they stand out from others and indicate that they are significant. If every other word in your document is bold, however, the effect of the contrast is lost. A similar effect occurs when you overuse a highlighter when marking a textbook: important information gets lost rather than being easier to find.

Look at the first page of this chapter. You can immediately see the name "Document Design" and recognize that it is the title of the chapter. Your eye is immediately drawn to it because it is the biggest item on the page. Just below the title, the authors' names are in smaller, italicized text. The contrast between the size and emphasis in the two lines of text quickly illustrates that they are providing different information.

Repetition

Repetition involves the use of consistency to visually group multiple items that express similar ideas or are somehow related. You can apply this design element to graphics, including the use of shapes and color. For example, many of your textbooks may include a section summarizing key ideas from the text. By placing all summaries in a similarly shaped box or highlighted by the same color, you can tell that these items have something in common. Once you realize that all summaries in your political science textbook are in green boxes, you can find them at glance.

You can apply repetition simply by formatting text in different ways. When you look at a restaurant menu, you'll see that the larger categories—like "Appetizers" and "Desserts"—are presented in the same font and size as each other, which is different from the listing of the food items themselves. This repeated format shows that those categories are equivalent. It also indicates that a new section is beginning, as do the headings that divide sections of this chapter. In papers writ- ten for a class, you express repetition in text primarily through placement, such as always putting page numbers in the same place on the page. On a Works Cited page, the organization of citation materials (such as the author's name and book title) makes information easier to locate. Repetition makes your intent more obvious to readers.

Repetition lets you quickly glance through this book and find in- formation, even in sections you haven't already read. To find the first page of a chapter, you look for a large title with lots of white space above it. If you're looking for a specific page in the book, you know to look at the outside corners to locate the page numbers.

Alignment

In design, alignment refers to the placement of elements on a page. While everything on a page is aligned in that it has been placed somewhere, some alignment strategies are better than others. You can think of it as asking a sick friend, "Do you have a temperature?" Of course, everyone has a temperature; what you're asking is if your friend has an elevated or abnormal temperature. In the same way, when document designers talk about alignment, they typically mean consistent alignment. For example, text that is left justified or graphics that run along the edge of the page are considered properly aligned.

Aligning elements creates a cleaner, more attractive design and emphasizes the consistency of information on a page. Alignment also helps readers access and process information in a publication. Appropriately aligned text clarifies for the reader where ideas begin and end. It also increases readability by allowing the reader's eye to return to a consistent location on the page while reading.

Breaking the alignment scheme is also a valuable design tool. When a block quote is indented, it is quickly apparent that the text has a slightly different meaning than the text above and below it.

The text alignment throughout this chapter indicates when a topic is changing and how a large piece of text (the chapter) can be broken into smaller chunks (the sections). Main headings within the text are centered over justified body text. To find the idea you're looking for, you can look for the centered text and know that a new idea is being introduced.

Proximity

Proximity is the grouping of elements that have something in common. Often a layout involves a single idea, and the designer uses the entire page to place thematically related text and graphics. When multiple ideas are included on a single page, the reader can tell which are related based on how close—or far—they are from each other. An obvious example is a box including a photo and its caption.

In academic writing and formatting, the placement of text often illustrates proximity. You place headings that identify the content of a section directly above that section, cuing the reader to a shift. This proximity also allows readers to quickly find related information based on the heading of a section.

Look at the image labeled as Fig. 1. As soon as you see the graphic, you can look immediately below it, see what it is named and why it is included. What if that label was on the next page? Placing related elements together is an efficient way to make sure they are properly understood.

For More Information

Design texts aren't just for professional designers! You can find examples of the principles discussed here in a variety of design books. Look for a basic book that covers designing with images and text to learn more. A good one to start with is Robin Williams *Non-Designer's Design Book;* many of the ideas in this chapter are based on ones presented in her book.

How You Can Apply These Design Principles

Incorporating design principles into a publication has an immediate and compelling effect. Even text-heavy documents, such as academic papers or resumes, become more appealing and comprehensible with even minor restructuring.

The example in Fig. 1 shows an unformatted resume. The lack of repetition, contrast, alignment, and proximity make the document unattractive as well as difficult to follow. There is no way to easily distinguish important information, like the applicant's name and contact information. Sections run together, and no key ideas are clear.

Fig. 2 shows the same content using the previously discussed design elements. The document is more visually appealing as well as being easier to review. Each individual design principle is involved, and their combination leads to a stronger design.

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Education2008 – Bachelor of Arts, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ Major: Creative Writing Minor in Political Science
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Employment2007 – current Editorial Assistant, *Political Science Summary, Tucson, AZ*
Managed day-to-day activities of a monthly journal in political science. Tracked manuscript submissions and kept in contact with authors and publisher.
2006 – 2007 Graphic Design Intern, University of Arizona Marketing and Communications, Tucson, AZ
Designed and produced marketing brochures, pamphlets, and catalogs. Maintained web sites for participating clients.
2002 – 2004 Server, Phoenix Café, Phoenix, AZ
Took customer orders, managed nightly restaurant closing, prepared bank deposits

Software Skills
Adobe: InDesign, Illustrator, Dreamweaver
Microsoft: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Operating Systems: Macintosh and Windows

Clubs and Organizations
Alpha Beta Fraternity (President)
Student Ambassadors

Fig. 1. An unformatted resume.

Repetition is shown through the consistent emphasis and text used in the various sections of the resume. There is contrast between the size of the author's name and the contact information, clearly high- lighting the most significant information. School and business names shown in bold create strong contrast within lines of text.

Text is firmly and consistently aligned. Text is easy to read from the left justification, and the author's name is highlighted as the only centered text on the page. Proximity makes finding information simple, as section headings are placed directly above their supporting information.

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Education

2008 – Bachelor of Arts, **University of Arizona**, Tucson, AZ
Major: Creative Writing Minor: Political Science
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Employment

2007 – current Editorial Assistant, **Political Science Summary**, Tucson, AZ

- Managed day-to-day activities of a monthly journal in political science.
- Tracked manuscript submissions and kept in contact with authors and publisher.

2006 – 2007 Graphic Design Intern, **University of Arizona Marketing and Communications**, Tucson, AZ

- Designed and produced marketing brochures, pamphlets, and catalogs.
- Maintained web sites for participating clients.

2002 – 2004 Server, **Phoenix Café**, Phoenix, AZ

- Took customer orders
- Managed nightly restaurant closing
- Prepared bank deposits

Software Skills

Adobe: InDesign, Illustrator, Dreamweaver
Microsoft: Word, Excel, PowerPoint
Operating Systems: Macintosh and Windows

Clubs and Organizations

- Alpha Beta Fraternity (President)
- Student Ambassadors

Fig. 2. A formatted resume.

The Basics of Style Guides

Style guides are collections of conventions on everything from word choice to format gathered into one place and used in writing. Their primary purpose is to ensure that all documents in a given environment adhere to a certain look and consistent use of language, but they serve a much broader purpose.

Style guides eliminate the guesswork in areas of writing that have multiple options. For example, both advisor and adviser are accurate spellings of a word; a style guide specifies which instance is preferred for the document you are writing. Style guides assure consistency in an organization's publications, such as placing the titles and page numbers in the same area of the page for all documents. Finally, they make reading and comprehension easier for the audience by presenting similar information in similar ways. Readers who want to view the source material you've used in a paper, for example, will refer to your list of authors and publications. The format and even the title of this section will vary depending on the style guide you've chosen. The "Works Cited" or "Reference" pages provide the information on all referenced documents in a presentation different from the main text, making it easy to identify.

Most academic disciplines follow a style guide. In addition, many companies and academic institutions establish their own style guides to supplement established style guides. In most writing courses, as well as other courses in the humanities, we use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style.

A Primer on MLA Style

The Modern Language Association produced their first "MLA style sheet" in 1951 as a way to ensure consistency within documents shared in the academic community. The style sheet evolved into the first edition of the *MLA Handbook* in 1977. Now in its seventh edition, the *MLA Handbook* is the primary source for stylistic choices made in writing for the humanities.

Style guides reflect the items of importance in writing for a particular community. The types and structure in information shown in the MLA style guide differ from those in other disciplines. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA)—used by many of the sciences—has its own style guide. Even popular media, including newspapers and magazines have their own style guide: the Associated Press (AP) guide.

Writers using a specific style guide will emphasize different pieces of information. For example, citations in MLA emphasize the author as primary focus, while the APA style guide features dates (see Fig. 3). Style guides are dynamic documents, and they change to reflect evolutions in technology for both research and production. When MLA style was first developed, it did not include a style for referencing

MLA Style In-Text Citation

Johnson felt that "there was a lack of trust amongst people when it came to money" (234).

Some researchers argue that money creates "a lack of trust amongst people" (Johnson 234).

MLA Style Works Cited

Crowley, Sharon, and Debra Hawhee. *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*. 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Education, 2004.

APA Style In-Text Citation

Johnson (2003) felt that "there was a lack of trust amongst people when it came to money" (p. 234).

Some researchers argue that money creates "a lack of trust amongst people" (Johnson, 2003, p.234).

APA Style Reference

Crowley, S. & Hawhee, D. (2004). *Ancient rhetorics for contemporary students.* (3rd ed.) New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Fig. 3. MLA and APA emphasize different citation elements.

Internet sources. As online media became an increasingly significant means of sharing resources, the style guide was adapted to incorporate references for Web sites, online journals, and print journals retrieved online. Changes in production options for writers and publishers also influenced changes to style guides. When authors typed papers using traditional typewriters, they were unable to use italics to indicate the name of a publication; instead, the underlining of text indicated these documents. Modern word processing programs allow the author to control type at a much more precise level, allowing italics as well as control of spacing and line breaks.

Like most style guides, MLA style changes over time. The guidelines presented here are appropriate for the seventh edition of the MLA Style Guide. You should check to make sure you are using the most current version. In the college courses you take, your individual instructors may impose additional style choices or ones that conflict with the style guide for the academic discipline. Be sure to follow the special style instructions for the assignments in that course.

Applying MLA Style in Your Own Papers

The way you use words and place text on a page influence the audience's ability to comprehend information. Much the way the shape of a stop sign indicates the same meaning as "STOP" to a driver, readers understand information in part through its placement and format. As a result, there is consistency among the papers submitted within a writing classroom and established journals in an academic field. This consistency allows readers to become accustomed to certain conventions and increases readability. When a professor reviews multiple papers formatted in the same way, for example, she can easily find the author's name and class section on all of the papers. Likewise, students in an English class will be able to find a source from the information given in an academic journal because they can understand in-text citation and bibliographic reference.

MLA-formatted papers for a class rarely include graphic elements, like illustrations or tables. In fact, MLA style limits the use of design in formatting to ensure that the focus remains on the text. Settings specified by MLA incorporate the design principles reviewed above. The remainder of the chapter discusses MLA formatting of academic papers, like the research papers you'll develop in your writing classes, as opposed to writing for publication, such as professional journals.

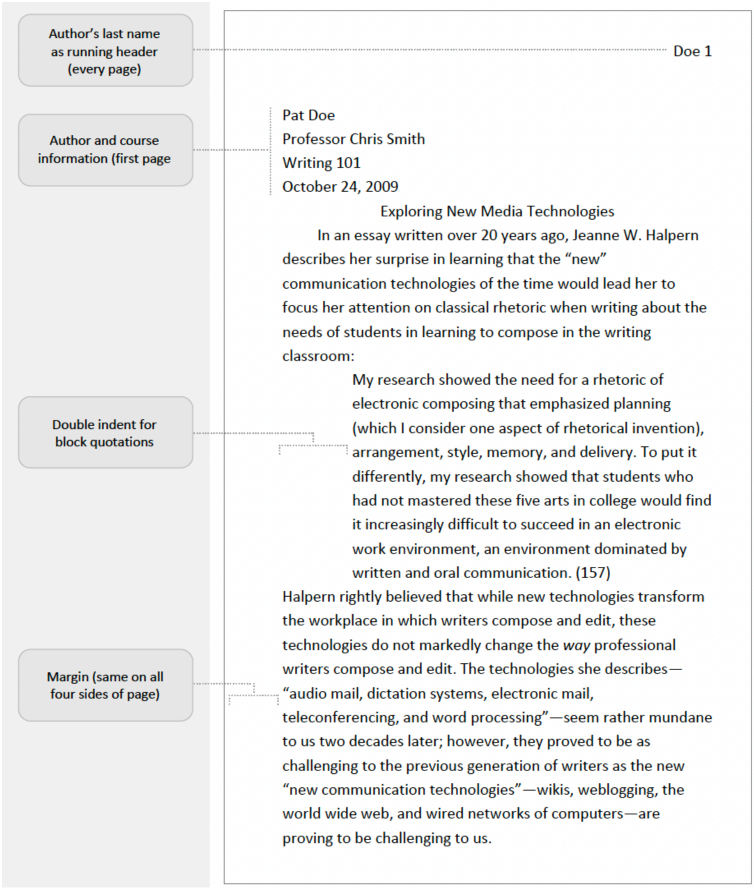
The primary use of repetition in MLA format is to indicate that text formatted in the same way throughout a paper signifies a similar use. Contrast is important in separating distinct sections of a paper from one another. Alignment in MLA increases readability by providing a common starting point for the reader. Proximity helps readers follow related ideas. For example, section headers are located directly over the text they introduce, allowing readers to quickly find information.

Margins

Margins are the distance from the edge of the paper to where the text starts. They define the amount of white space around the text on the page. They are important because they emphasize the text through contrast (black text on a white page) and increase readability through consistent alignment (headings and text line up to the left margin). Margins also contribute to readability by providing a place for the reader's eyes to rest: they ensure appropriate white space to prevent a page from becoming too dense with text.

The MLA style guide requires specific margins of one inch (1") on all four sides of a page (see Fig. 4).

See section 4.1 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on margins.



Doe 1

Pat Doe
Professor Chris Smith
Writing 101
October 24, 2009

Exploring New Media Technologies

In an essay written over 20 years ago, Jeanne W. Halpern describes her surprise in learning that the "new" communication technologies of the time would lead her to focus her attention on classical rhetoric when writing about the needs of students in learning to compose in the writing classroom:

> My research showed the need for a rhetoric of electronic composing that emphasized planning (which I consider one aspect of rhetorical invention), arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. To put it differently, my research showed that students who had not mastered these five arts in college would find it increasingly difficult to succeed in an electronic work environment, an environment dominated by written and oral communication. (157)

Halpern rightly believed that while new technologies transform the workplace in which writers compose and edit, these technologies do not markedly change the *way* professional writers compose and edit. The technologies she describes—"audio mail, dictation systems, electronic mail, teleconferencing, and word processing"—seem rather mundane to us two decades later; however, they proved to be as challenging to the previous generation of writers as the new "new communication technologies"—wikis, weblogging, the world wide web, and wired networks of computers—are proving to be challenging to us.

Fig. 4. The first page of a paper formatted according to MLA style.

Typeface and Spacing

Appropriate typeface usage involves all design elements. The repetition of a single font throughout a document shows the reader that each section of the paper is part of a single whole. The strong visual color contrast of black text on a white background increases readability. Black text, for example, is easier to read than gray text, a difference you may notice when your printer is low on ink. Alignment indicates a separation of ideas or the introduction of a new concept. The title of the paper centered over the left-aligned text shows the beginning of the paper's content. The placement of section titles illustrates proximity. Each one is adjacent to its respective text directly above the first paragraph of a section.

MLA requires a serif font (like Times New Roman) in 12-point type. A serif font is one that has edges or "feet" on the ends of letters. A sans-serif font (like Arial) is straighter, without edges or flares as part of its shape. Serif fonts are traditionally easier to read, though this distinction has decreased as desktop publishing programs and font qualities have improved.

All text, from the initial header through the reference page, must be double-spaced (see Fig. 5). There is no additional spacing before or after headings. Each new paragraph is indented by ½ inch. The consistent spacing within the document makes reading easier as well as providing a reviewer with room for notes. The indention of each paragraph clearly indicates the beginning of a new idea.

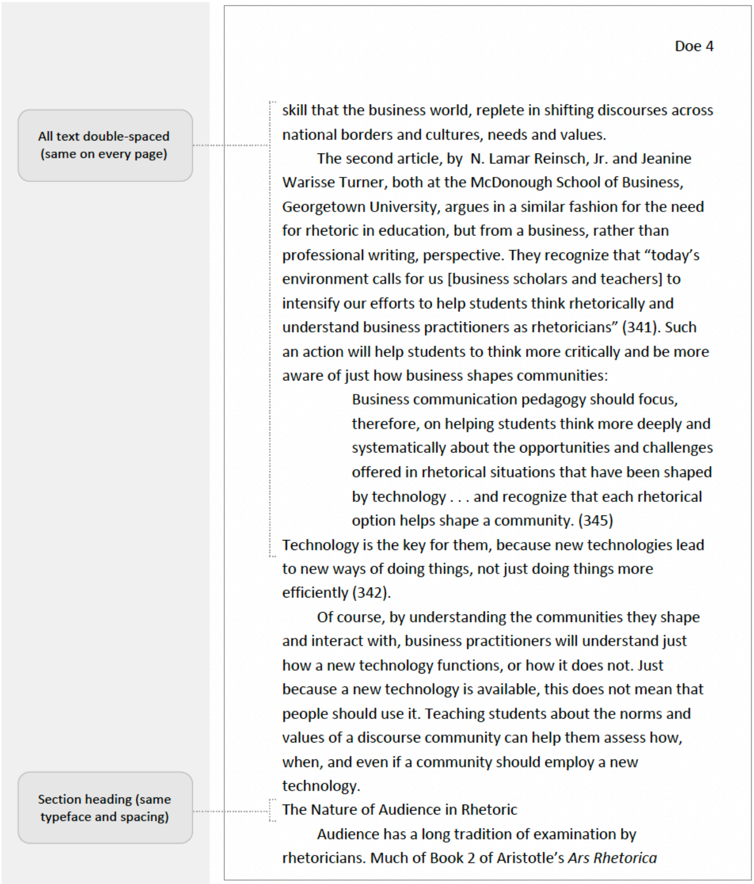
See section 4.2 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on typeface and spacing.

Title and Headings

A title and internal headings help to separate the body of the paper into smaller, more specific, sections. They break text into shorter, more readable sections, or chunk information in the paper into reasonable portions. In addition, headings allow the reader to quickly skim through a document in search of specific ideas. Headings are described in levels, meaning their hierarchal structure in the paper. A second level heading must follow a first level heading. For example, after reading this entire chapter, you can easily find information on a specific element by looking for the appropriate heading.

Within MLA style, the title refers to the entire paper, while headings refer to individual sections within the paper. The contrast in MLA titles and headings comes mainly from alignment. Both students writing in the classroom and professionals writing for publication use MLA style. Limiting the amount of formatting—like adding italics or bold for emphasis—and focusing on alignment helps ensure that headings remain consistent when different fonts are used. The title is centered over the main text; headings are left justified over body text that is indented (see Fig. 5).

See section 4.3 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on titles and headings.



Doe 4

skill that the business world, replete in shifting discourses across national borders and cultures, needs and values.

The second article, by N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr. and Jeanine Warisse Turner, both at the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University, argues in a similar fashion for the need for rhetoric in education, but from a business, rather than professional writing, perspective. They recognize that "today's environment calls for us [business scholars and teachers] to intensify our efforts to help students think rhetorically and understand business practitioners as rhetoricians" (341). Such an action will help students to think more critically and be more aware of just how business shapes communities:

> Business communication pedagogy should focus, therefore, on helping students think more deeply and systematically about the opportunities and challenges offered in rhetorical situations that have been shaped by technology . . . and recognize that each rhetorical option helps shape a community. (345)

Technology is the key for them, because new technologies lead to new ways of doing things, not just doing things more efficiently (342).

Of course, by understanding the communities they shape and interact with, business practitioners will understand just how a new technology functions, or how it does not. Just because a new technology is available, this does not mean that people should use it. Teaching students about the norms and values of a discourse community can help them assess how, when, and even if a community should employ a new technology.

The Nature of Audience in Rhetoric

Audience has a long tradition of examination by rhetoricians. Much of Book 2 of Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica*

Fig. 5. A page formatted in MLA style showing double-spacing and a section heading.

Headers and Page Numbers

Headers are a user service, providing information to readers regarding their location in the text. The header includes the author's last name and the page number (see Fig. 4). Because the header information is formatted consistently and placed in the exact location on each page, this use of repetition helps readers easily find and identify document information.

On the initial page of a research paper, the header also includes the author's name, the date of submission, course instructor's name and course designation, usually left justified (see Fig. 4). This information, but not its placement, may vary depending on your course. Always check with your professor or refer to handouts provided in class for specifics.

Subsequent pages of the paper require that the author's last name and page number be placed in the upper, right-hand corner of the page, one-half inch (0.5") from the top edge of the page and one inch (1") from the right edge of the paper.

See section 4.4 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on page numbers.

Illustrations

Illustrations, including photographs, line drawings, maps, or graphs, help your readers better understand the information you are communicating. Sometimes illustrations support the function of the text. For example, we use the illustrations in this chapter to help you better understand the concepts we are writing about. Understanding the importance of graphics would be much harder with no illustrations as support. In other instances, the illustrations themselves are the primary pieces of information. For instance, a simple graph can be far more dramatic and comprehensible than a long paragraph full of numbers and percentages. With MLA style, illustrations should be labeled *Figure* (usually abbreviated as *Fig.*), numbered consecutively, and given a brief caption following the label. As we have done with the illustrations in this chapter, the caption should readily identify the key feature of the illustration. Place the illustration as close as possible to the text where you first reference it to help readers understand why you included it.

Writers frequently use illustrations created by others to supplement their writing. If you find an image on a website, you cannot use it without permission. And while some websites explicitly give permission to use their images, you must still cite the source in your own work.

While you can use others' properly attributed illustrations, sometimes you will create the illustrations yourself. For example, you may want to capture an image of your computer's desktop to add to a document about computer systems. To copy a screen shot of your computer to the clipboard, press <Ctrl-Shift-Command> (Apple)-3 on Mac OS X or <Print Screen> on Windows. Once on the clipboard, the image will be available for you to manipulate with an image editing software or paste unaltered into almost any type of graphics program.

While some images may already be exactly the way you need them, most of the time you will need to make changes to images before you can use them. Two free image editing software packages are GIMP— the GNU Image Manipulation Program—for Mac OS X and Windows systems (available at <http://www.gimp.org/>) and Paint.NET for use only on Windows systems (available at <getpaint.net>).

Other things to remember when using illustrations:

- *Always use visuals of good quality.* A bad illustration can distract your reader and lessen the credibility of your argument.
- *Don't distort the image.* Keep the image in proportion by holding the <Shift> key as you are adjusting the image in your word processor.
- *Make sure the image is of the right quality and resolution.* An image that looks great on a website may not look as good when printed. Check the resolution of the image before enlarging it so there is no loss of quality.
- *Use the image at the appropriate size.* Don't try to force a full-page PowerPoint slide into a one-inch square space.
- *Crop images to remove extraneous material.* Keep the focus on the important part of the illustration, just like you do with text. For example, if including a web browser screenshot of a web page in a paper, readers do not

need to see the browser window frame or your favorites/bookmarks menu in the visual used in the document.

- See section 4.5 of the *MLA Handbook* for information on working with illustrations.

Conclusion

While not every class, assignment or topic lends itself to the inclusion of graphics, you can still design your documents to be appealing to your reader. Good design choices can also make your document more accessible to your readers. A clean design with graphic and typographical indicators of content gives your readers more opportunities to engage with and understand your intention.

Style guides define typographical and design rules for you as a writer and a reader. MLA is the most commonly used style guide in first year writing, but most disciplines have their own. All style guides answer the questions you commonly encounter as a writer—Should page numbers be at the top or bottom of the page? How do I cite an article from a magazine's Web site? When you answer these questions, you can concentrate on the writing itself and developing your ideas. As a reader, you will be able to identify an established style and use it to your advantage. Finding the information you want (paper topics, authors cited) is easier when you know where to look (headings, reference pages). While the reasoning behind the rules in a style guide may not be intuitive, following them leads to better-designed documents.

Works Cited

Modern Language Association of America. *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: MLA, 2009. Print.

Keywords

document, design, **formatting**, graphics, contrast, repetition, alignment, **proximity**

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Attributions

46.

CELEBRATION OF STUDENT WRITING

Abstract

This chapter is an excerpt from the article "WPA Responsive Genre Change: Using Holographic Thinking to Unflatten a Celebration of Student Writing," by Kate Pantelides, Jacie Castle, and Katherine Thach Musick in Radiant Figures: Visual Rhetorics in Everyday Administrative Contexts. The chapter describes the purpose of a Celebration of Student Writing (CSW), offers maps of the MTSU CSW, and images from the CSW.

Learn more about MTSU CSW 2024 on the MTSU News website.

See what an MTSU CSW looks like! Check out this video made by Dr. Eric Detweiler's students.

Celebrations of Student Writing, though not entirely ubiquitous across writing programs, have been a hallmark of writing research courses for years. Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem (2003) first wrote about Eastern Michigan University's embrace of the CSW as the writing program's capstone experience in 2003. For them, the CSW was "intended to assert a more public presence for college writing" and "address the struggles some writing instructors describe in their discussions of research writing." Further, in redesigning their curriculum they were eager to find a balance between instructor autonomy and program coherence; in short, they "wanted everyone to be in the same ballpark, even one as big as Yankee Stadium" (Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2003). The CSW allowed this program coherence to develop organically, to orient questions about curriculum design in terms of a clear, tangible context, "a rhetorically situated audience" (Carter & Gallegos, 2017, p. 79). One of my colleagues, Chelsea Lonsdale, describes the CSW as a sort of "science fair for writing," an apt description, though in some ways a CSW is the anti-science fair, a demonstration that humanities research need not be defined in terms of the scientific method.

Instituted in 2016, our university CSW is, in many ways, still in its fledgling phase. Although many CSWs are particularly dedicated to displaying the fruits of research writing developed in the second semester composition class, at our university all English classes are invited to participate. First-year students through graduate students are represented in our event, as well as students taking composition, literature, and creative writing courses, and we offer simultaneously the fair-style art installations and poster presentations in one room during the CSW, and creative readings and plays in an adjacent space. In this way our CSW has a departmental mission of uniting English sub-disciplines that is perhaps a higher priority for us than demonstrating the products of research writing to the wider university audience.

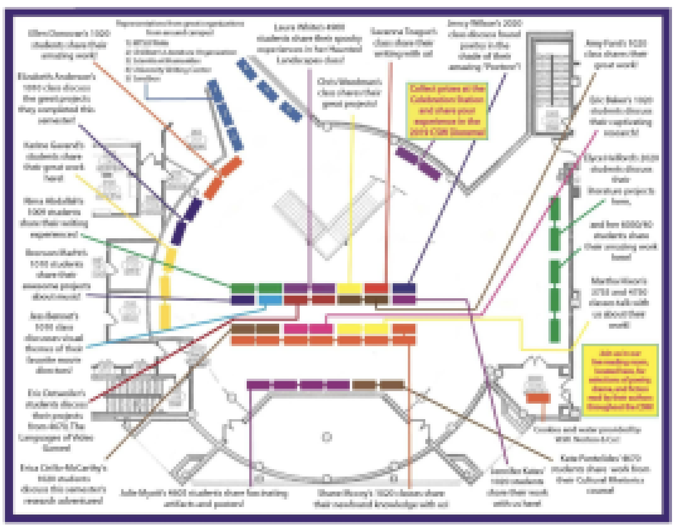

Figure 1. The Map for the Middle Tennessee State University 2019 Celebration of Student Writing

Figure 2. The Collaboratively Constructed Diorama at the Middle Tennessee State University 2019 Celebration of Student Writing

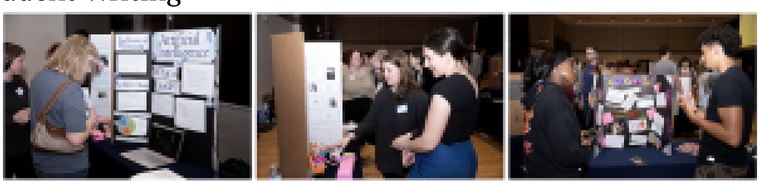

Figure 3. Photographs from MTSU Celebrations of Student Writing

Attributions

This chapter is an adaptation of "WPA Responsive Genre Change" by Kate Pantelides, Jacie Castle, and Katherine Thach Musick published in Radiant Figures and is used

PART VI

REFLECTION

Sometimes you think. Sometimes you think about thinking. Sometimes you think about thinking about thinking. Sometimes you think about thinking about thinking about…

For many students, reflection may sound like something tacked onto the end of a writing project—a quick recap, a few vague thoughts, maybe an afterthought. But reflection is more than a closing gesture. It is a vital part of the writing process itself, a way of thinking about your thinking, of revisiting your choices, strategies, and struggles to become a more intentional communicator. Reflection sharpens your awareness, deepens your understanding, and helps you transfer your learning to new contexts. In short, it turns writing into growth, and it's the necessary step in transferring your learning from a classroom context to writing and thinking outside of the classroom.

The chapters in this section explore reflection not just as a final step, but as an integrated, powerful tool for learning. We begin with Sandra Giles' Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking?, which grounds us in the concept of reflection and offers practical strategies for making your revision process more meaningful and effective. Giles recounts her own transformation as a writer and teacher, showing how authentic reflection can lead to more thoughtful writing and clearer intentions.

Derek Van Ittersum and Tim Lockridge's Find the Best Tools for the Job: Experimenting with Writing Workflows encourages you to reflect on the tools you use when writing—pen and paper, word processors, apps—and how they shape your experience. By becoming more aware of your writing workflows, you can better understand what helps or hinders you and develop approaches that support your creativity and focus.

Next, Benjamin Miller's What's the Diff? Version History and Revision Reflections introduces a method of using version histories and revision notes to track and reflect on your growth as a writer. Miller shows how even small changes can signal meaningful developments in your thinking, and how looking back at those changes can motivate and guide your future work.

This section also includes Student Research Reflections, which features undergraduate writers from *Young Scholars in Writing* who share their reflections on becoming researchers. These pieces—by Nidhi Gandhi, Emily Lawrence, and Isabelle Lundin—offer real examples of how student writers develop critical self-awareness and confidence in their writing and research processes and can serve as models for reflective writing.

Finally, Lindsay Knisely's Reflection Exercise: Using

Reflection and Metacognition to Develop Your Half Essay offers a concrete classroom activity that helps students pause mid-way through a writing project to reflect, revise, and plan forward. Knisely's assignment provides a flexible and portable tool that supports deeper analysis and better writing by making reflection an ongoing habit rather than a one-time task.

Together, these chapters invite you to see reflection not as something optional, but essential. By stepping back to consider what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how you might do it differently, you gain more control over your writing and insight into yourself as a thinker and communicator.

47.

REFLECTIVE WRITING AND THE REVISION PROCESS: WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

Sandra Giles

Abstract

Sandra Giles's article from *Writing Spaces*, "Reflective Writing and the Revision Process: What Were You Thinking?" highlights one of the most important writing skills: metacognition. This essay combines personal

anecdotes, teaching materials, extensive secondary research, and invitations for thought experiments. Arguably, Giles's recommendation to reflect on our writing practices throughout the process is the most important part of conducting research.

Read the text below or as a PDF.

"Reflection" and "reflective writing" are umbrella terms that refer to any activity that asks you to think about your own thinking. As composition scholars Kathleen Blake Yancey and Jane Bowman Smith explain, reflection records a "student's process of thinking about what she or he is doing while in the process of that doing" (170). In a writing class, you may be asked to think about your writing processes in general or in relation to a particular essay, to think about your intentions regarding rhetorical elements such as audience and purpose, or to think about your choices regarding development strategies such as comparison-contrast, exemplification, or definition. You may be asked to describe your decisions regarding language features such as word choice, sentence rhythm, and so on. You may be asked to evaluate or assess your piece of writing or your development as a writer in general. Your instructor may also ask you to perform these kinds of activities at various points in your process of working on a project, or at the end of the semester.

A Writer's Experience

The first time I had to perform reflective writing myself was in the summer of 2002. And it did feel like a performance, at first. I was a doctoral student in Wendy Bishop's Life Writing class at Florida State University, and it was the first class I had ever taken where we English majors actually practiced what we preached; which is to say, we actually put ourselves through the various elements of process writing. Bishop led us through invention exercises, revision exercises, language activities, and yes, reflective writings. For each essay, we had to write what she called a "process note" in which we explained our processes of working on the essay, as well as our thought processes in developing the ideas. We also discussed what we might want to do with (or to) the essay in the future, beyond the class. At the end of the semester, we composed a self-evaluative cover letter for our portfolio in which we discussed each of our essays from the semester and recorded our learning and insights about writing and about the genre of nonfiction.

My first process note for the class was a misguided attempt at good-student-gives-the-teacher-what-she-wants. Our assignment had been to attend an event in town and write about it. I had seen an email announcement about a medium visiting from England who would perform a "reading" at the Unity Church in town. So I went and took notes. And wrote two consecutive drafts. After peer workshop, a third. And then I had to write the process note, the likes of which I had never done before. It felt awkward, senseless. Worse than writing a scholarship application or some other mundane writing task. Like a waste of time, and like it wasn't real writing at all. But it was required.

So, hoop-jumper that I was, I wrote the following: "This

will eventually be part of a longer piece that will explore the Foundation for Spiritual Knowledge in Tallahassee, Florida, which is a group of local people in training to be mediums and spirituals healers. These two goals are intertwined." Yeah, right. Nice and fancy. Did I really intend to write a book-length study on those folks? I thought my professor would like the idea, though, so I put it in my note. Plus, my peer reviewers had asked for a longer, deeper piece. That statement would show I was being responsive to their feedback, even though I didn't agree with it. The peer reviewers had also wanted me to put myself into the essay more, to do more with first-person point of view rather than just writing a reporter-style observation piece. I still disagree with them, but what I should have done in the original process note was go into why: my own search for spirituality and belief could not be handled in a brief essay. I wanted the piece to be about the medium herself, and mediumship in general, and the public's reaction, and why a group of snarky teenagers thought they could be disruptive the whole time and come off as superior. I did a better job later—more honest and thoughtful and revealing about my intentions for the piece—in the self-evaluation for the portfolio. That's because, as the semester progressed and I continued to have to write those darned process notes, I dropped the attitude. In a conference about my writing, Bishop responded to my note by asking questions focused entirely on helping me refine my intentions for the piece, and I realized my task wasn't to please or try to dazzle her. I stopped worrying about how awkward the reflection was, stopped worrying about how to please the teacher,
and started actually reflecting and thinking. New habits

and ways of thinking formed. And unexpectedly, all the hard decisions about revising for the next draft began to come more easily.

And something else clicked, too. Two and a half years previously, I had been teaching composition at a small two-year college. Composition scholar Peggy O'Neill taught a workshop for us English teachers on an assignment she called the "Letter to the Reader." That was my introduction to reflective writing as a teacher, though I hadn't done any of it myself at that point. I thought, "Okay, the composition scholars say we should get our students to do this." So I did, but it did not work very well with my students at the time. Here's why: I didn't come to understand what it could do for a writer, or how it would do it, until I had been through it myself.

After Bishop's class, I became a convert. I began studying reflection, officially called metacognition, and began developing ways of using it in writing classes of all kinds, from composition to creative nonfiction to fiction writing. It works. Reflection helps you to develop your intentions (purpose), figure out your relation to your audience, uncover possible problems with your individual writing processes, set goals for revision, make decisions about language and style, and the list goes on. In a nutshell, it helps you develop more insight into and control over composing and revising processes. And according to scholars such as Chris M. Anson, developing this control is a feature that distinguishes stronger from weaker writers and active from passive learners (69–73).

My Letter to the Reader Assignment

Over recent years, I've developed my own version of the Letter to the Reader, based on O'Neill's workshop and Bishop's class assignments. For each essay, during a revising workshop, my students first draft their letters to the reader and then later, polish them to be turned in with the final draft. Letters are composed based on the following instructions:

This will be a sort of cover letter for your essay. It should be on a separate sheet of paper, typed, stapled to the top of the final draft. Date the letter and address it to "Dear Reader." Then do the following in nicely developed, fat paragraphs:

1. Tell the reader what you intend for the essay to do for its readers. Describe its purpose(s) and the effect(s) you want it to have on the readers. Say who you think the readers are.
    - Describe your process of working on the essay. How did you narrow the assigned topic? What kind of planning did you do? What steps did you go through, what changes did you make along the way, what decisions did you face, and how did you make the decisions?
    - How did comments from your peers, in peer workshop, help you? How did any class activities on style, editing, etc., help you?

2. Remember to sign the letter. After you've drafted it, think about whether your letter and essay match up. Does the essay really do what your letter promises? If not, then use the draft of your letter as a revising tool to make a few more adjustments to your essay. Then, when the essay is
polished and ready to hand in, polish the letter as well and hand them in together.

Following is a sample letter that shows how the act of answering these prompts can help you uncover issues in your essays that need to be addressed in further revision. This letter is a mock-up based on problems I've seen over the years. We discuss it thoroughly in my writing classes:

> Dear Reader,
>
> This essay is about how I feel about the changes in the financial aid rules. I talk about how they say you're not eligible even if your parents aren't supporting you anymore. I also talk a little bit about the HOPE scholarship. But my real purpose is to show how the high cost of books makes it impossible to afford college if you can't get on financial aid. My readers will be all college students. As a result, it should make students want to make a change. My main strategy in this essay is to describe how the rules have affected me personally.
>
> I chose this topic because this whole situation has really bugged me. I did freewriting to get my feelings out on paper, but I don't think that was effective because it seemed jumbled and didn't flow. So I started over with an outline and went on from there. I'm still not sure how to

> start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader's interest but I don't know how to do that. I try to include many different arguments to appeal to different types of students to make the whole argument seem worthwhile on many levels.
> I did not include comments from students because I want everyone to think for themselves and form their own opinion. That's my main strategy. I don't want the paper to be too long and bore the reader. I was told in peer workshop to include information from other students at other colleges with these same financial aid problems. But I didn't do that because I don't know anybody at another school. I didn't want to include any false information.
> Thanks,
> (signature)

Notice how the letter shows us, as readers of the letter, some problems in the essay without actually having to read the essay. From this (imaginary) student's point of view, the act of drafting this letter should show her the problems, too. In her first sentence, she announces her overall topic. Next she identifies a particular problem: the way "they" define whether an applicant is dependent on or independent of parents. So far, pretty good, except her use of the vague pronoun "they" makes me hope she hasn't been that vague in the essay itself. Part of taking on a topic is learning enough about it to be specific. Specific is effective; vague is not. Her next comment about the HOPE scholarship makes me wonder if she's narrowed her topic enough. When she said "financial aid," I assumed federal, but HOPE is particular to the state of Georgia and has its own set of very particular rules, set by its own committee in Atlanta. Can she effectively cover both federal financial aid, such as the Pell Grant for example, as well as HOPE, in the same essay, when the rules governing them are different? Maybe. We'll see. I wish the letter would address more specifically how she sorts that out in the essay. Then she says that her "real purpose" is to talk about the cost of books. Is that really her main purpose? Either she doesn't have a good handle on what she wants her essay to do or she's just throwing language around to sound good in the letter. Not good, either way.

When she says she wants the readers to be all college students, she has identified her target audience, which is good. Then this: "As a result, it should make students want to make a change." Now, doesn't that sound more in line with a statement of purpose? Here the writer makes clear, for the first time, that she wants to write a persuasive piece on the topic. But then she says that her "main strategy" is to discuss only her own personal experience. That's not a strong enough strategy, by itself, to be persuasive.

In the second section, where she discusses process, she seems to have gotten discouraged when she thought that freewriting hadn't worked because it resulted in something "jumbled." But she missed the point that freewriting works to generate ideas, which often won't come out nicely organized. It's completely fine, and normal, to use freewriting to generate ideas and then organize them with perhaps an outline as a second step. As a teacher, when I read comments like this in a letter, I write a note to the student explaining that "jumbled" is normal, perfectly fine, and nothing to worry about. I'm glad when I read that sort of comment so I can reassure the student. If not for the letter, I probably wouldn't have known of her unfounded concern. It creates a teaching moment.

Our imaginary student then says, "I'm still not sure how to start the introduction off because I want to hook the reader's interest but don't know how to do that." This statement shows that she's thinking along the right lines—of capturing the reader's interest. But she hasn't quite figured out how to do that in this essay, probably because she doesn't have a clear handle on her purpose. I'd advise her to address that problem and to better develop her overall strategy, and then she would be in a better position to make a plan for the introduction. Again, a teaching moment. When she concludes the second paragraph of the letter saying that she wants to include "many different arguments" for "different types of students," it seems even more evident that she's not clear on purpose or strategy; therefore, she's just written a vague sentence she probably thought sounded good for the letter.

She begins her third paragraph with further proof of the problems. If her piece is to be persuasive, then she should not want readers to "think for themselves and form their own opinion." She most certainly should have included comments from other students, as her peer responders advised. It wouldn't be difficult to interview some fellow students at her own school. And as for finding out what students at other schools think about the issue, a quick search on the Internet would turn up newspaper or newsletter articles, as well as blogs and other relevant sources. Just because the official assignment may not have been to write a "research" paper doesn't mean you can't research. Some of your best material will come that way. And in this particular type of paper, your personal experience by itself, without support, will not likely persuade the reader. Now, I do appreciate when she says she doesn't want to include any "false information." A lot of students come to college with the idea that in English class, if you don't know any information to use, then you can just make it up so it sounds good. But that's not ethical, and it's not persuasive, and just a few minutes on the Internet will solve the problem.

This student, having drafted the above letter, should go back and analyze. Do the essay and letter match up? Does the essay do what the letter promises? And here, does the letter uncover lack of clear thinking about purpose and strategy? Yes, it does, so she should now go back and address these issues in her essay. Without having done this type of reflective exercise, she likely would have thought her essay was just fine, and she would have been unpleasantly surprised to get the grade back with my (the teacher's) extensive commentary and critique. She never would have predicted what I would say because she wouldn't have had a process for thinking through these issues—and might not have known how to begin thinking this way. Drafting the letter should help her develop more insight into and control over the revising process so she can make more effective decisions as she revises.

How It Works

Intentions—a sense of audience and purpose and of what the writer wants the essay to do—are essential to a good piece of communicative writing. Anson makes the point that when an instructor asks a student to verbalize his or her intentions, it is much more likely that the student will have intentions (qtd. in Yancey and Smith 174). We saw this process in mid-struggle with our imaginary student's work (above), and we'll see it handled more effectively in real student examples (below). As many composition scholars explain, reflective and self-assessing activities help writers set goals for their writing. For instance, Rebecca Moore Howard states that "writers who can assess their own prose can successfully revise that prose" (36). This position is further illustrated by Xiaoguang Cheng and Margaret S. Steffenson, who conducted and then reported a study clearly demonstrating a direct positive effect of reflection on student revising processes in "Metadiscourse: A Technique for Improving Student Writing." Yancey and Smith argue that self-assessment and reflection are essential to the learning process because they are a "method for assigning both responsibility and authority to a learner" (170). Students then become independent learners who can take what they learn about writing into the future beyond a particular class rather than remaining dependent on teachers or peer evaluators (171). Anson echoes this idea, saying that reflection helps a writer grow beyond simply succeeding in a particular writing project: "Once they begin thinking about writing productively, they stand a much better chance of developing expertise and working more successfully in future writing situations" (73).

Examples from Real Students

Let's see some examples from actual students now, although for the sake of space we'll look at excerpts. The first few illustrate how reflective writing helps you develop your intentions. For an assignment to write a profile essay, Joshua Dawson described his purpose and audience: "This essay is about my grandmother and how she overcame the hardships of life. [. . .] The purpose of this essay is to show how a woman can be tough and can take anything life throws at her. I hope the essay reaches students who have a single parent and those who don't know what a single parent goes through." Joshua showed a clear idea of what he wanted his essay to do. For a cultural differences paper, Haley Moore wrote about her mission trip to Peru: "I tried to show how, in America, we have everything from clean water to freedom of religion and other parts of the world do not. Also, I would like for my essay to inspire people to give donations or help in any way they can for the countries that live in poverty." Haley's final draft actually did not address the issue of donations and focused instead on the importance of mission work, a good revision decision that kept the essay more focused.

In a Composition II class, Chelsie Mathis wrote an argumentative essay on a set of controversial photos published in newspapers in the 1970s which showed a woman falling to her death during a fire escape collapse. Chelsie said,

> The main purpose of this essay is to argue whether the [newspaper] editors used correct judgment when deciding to publish such photos. The effect that I want my paper to have on the

> readers is to really make people think about others' feelings and to make people realize that poor judgment can have a big effect. [. . .] I intend for my readers to possibly be high school students going into the field of journalism or photojournalism.

Chelsie demonstrated clear thinking about purpose and about who she wanted her essay to influence. Another Comp II student, Daniel White, wrote, "This essay is a cognitive approach of how I feel YouTube is helping our society achieve its dreams and desires of becoming stars." I had no idea what he meant by "cognitive approach," but I knew he was taking a psychology class at the same time. I appreciated that he was trying to integrate his learning from that class into ours, trying to learn to use that vocabulary. I was sure that with more practice, he would get the hang of it. I didn't know whether he was getting much writing practice at all in psychology, so I was happy to let him practice it in my class. His reflection showed learning in process.

My students often resist writing about their composing processes, but it's good for them to see and analyze how they did what they did, and it also helps me know what they were thinking when they made composing decisions. Josh Autry, in regards to his essay on scuba diving in the Florida Keys at the wreck of the Spiegel Grove, said, "Mapping was my preferred method of outlining. It helped me organize my thoughts, go into detail, and pick the topics that I thought would be the most interesting to the readers." He also noted, "I choose [sic] to write a paragraph about everything that can happen to a diver that is not prepared but after reviewing it I was afraid that it would scare an interested diver away. I chose to

take that paragraph out and put a few warnings in the conclusion so the aspiring diver would not be clueless." This was a good decision that did improve the final draft. His
earlier draft had gotten derailed by a long discussion of the dangers of scuba diving in general. But he came to this realization and decided to correct it without my help—except that I had led the class through reflective revising activities. D'Amber Walker wrote, "At first my organization was off because I didn't know if I should start off with a personal experience which included telling a story or start with a statistic." Apparently, a former teacher had told her not to include personal experiences in her essays. I reminded her that in our workshop on introductions, we had discussed how a personal story can be a very effective hook to grab the reader's attention. So once again, a teaching moment. When Jonathan Kelly said, "I probably could have given more depth to this paper by interviewing a peer or something but I really felt unsure of how to go about doing so," I was able to scold him gently. If he really didn't know how to ask fellow students their opinions, all he had to do was ask me. But his statement shows an accurate assessment of how the paper could have been better. When Nigel Ellington titled his essay "If Everything Was Easy, Nothing Would Be Worth Anything," he explained, "I like this [title] because it's catchy and doesn't give too much away and it hooks you." He integrated what he learned in a workshop on titles. Doing this one little bit of reflective thinking cemented that learning and gave him a chance to use it in his actual paper.

How It Helps Me (the Instructor) Help You

Writing teachers often play two roles in relation to their students. I am my students' instructor, but I am also a fellow writer. As a writer, I have learned that revision can be overwhelming. It's tempting just to fiddle with words and commas if I don't know what else to do. Reflection is a mechanism, a set of procedures, to help me step back from a draft to gain enough distance to ask myself, "Is this really what I want the essay (or story or poem or article) to do? Is this really what I want it to say? Is this the best way to get it to say that?" To revise is to re-vision or re-see, to re-think these issues, but you have to create a critical distance to be able to imagine your piece done another way. Reflection helps you create that distance. It also helps your instructor better guide your work and respond to it.

The semester after my experience in Bishop's Life Writing Class, I took a Fiction Writing Workshop taught by Mark Winegardner, author of The Godfather Returns and The Godfather's Revenge, as well as numerous other novels and short stories. Winegardner had us create what he called the "process memo." As he indicated in an interview, he uses the memo mainly as a tool to help the workshop instructor know how to respond to the writer's story. If a writer indicates in the memo that he knows something is still a problem with the story, then the instructor can curtail lengthy discussion of that issue's existence during the workshop and instead prompt peers to provide suggestions. The instructor can give some pointed advice, or possibly reassurance, based on the writer's concerns that, without being psychic, the instructor would not otherwise have known about. Composition scholar Jeffrey Sommers notes that reflective pieces show teachers what your intentions for your writing actually are, which lets us respond to your writing accurately, rather than responding to what we think your intentions might be ("Enlisting" 101–2). He also points out that we can know how to reduce your anxiety about your writing appropriately ("Behind" 77). Thus, without a reflective memo, your teacher might pass right over the very issue you have been worried about.

The Habit of Self-Reflective Writing

One of the most important functions of reflective writing in the long run is to establish in you, the writer, a habit of self-reflective thinking. The first few reflective pieces you write may feel awkward and silly and possibly painful. You might play the teacher-pleasing game. But that's really not what we want (see Smith 129). Teachers don't want you to say certain things, we want you to think in certain ways. Once you get the hang of it and start to see the benefits in your writing, you'll notice that you've formed a habit of thinking reflectively almost invisibly. And not only will it help you in writing classes, but in any future writing projects for biology class, say, or even further in the future, in writing that you may do on the job, such as incident reports or annual reports for a business. You'll become a better writer. You'll become a better thinker. You'll become a better learner. And learning
is what you'll be doing for the rest of your life. I recently painted my kitchen. It was a painful experience. I had a four-day weekend and thought I could clean, prep, and

paint the kitchen, breakfast nook, and hallway to the garage in just four days, not to mention painting the trim and doors white. I pushed myself to the limit of endurance. And when I finished the wall color (not even touching the trim), I didn't like it. The experience was devastating. A very similar thing had happened three years before when I painted my home office a color I now call "baby poop." My home office is still "baby poop" because I got so frustrated I just gave up. Now, the kitchen was even worse. It was such a light green it looked like liver failure and didn't go with the tile on the floor. Plus, it showed brush marks and other flaws. What the heck?

But unlike three years ago, when I had given up, I decided to apply reflective practices to the situation. I decided to see it as time for revision-type thinking. Why had I wanted green to begin with? (Because I didn't want blue in a kitchen. I've really been craving that hot dark lime color that's popular now. So yes, I still want it to be green.) Why hadn't I chosen a darker green? (Because I have the darker, hotter color into the room with accessories. The lighter green has a more neutral effect that I shouldn't get sick of after six months. Perhaps I'll get used to it, especially when I get around to painting the trim white.) What caused the brush strokes? (I asked an expert. Two factors: using satin finish rather than eggshell, and using a cheap paintbrush for cut-in-areas.) How can they be fixed? (Most of the brush strokes are just in the cut-in areas and so they can be redone quickly with a better quality brush. That is, if I decide to keep this light green color.) Is the fact that the trim is still cream-colored rather than white part of the problem?
(Oh, yes. Fix that first and the other problems might

diminish.) What can I learn about timing for my next paint project? (That the cleaning and prep work take much longer than you think, and that you will need two coats, plus drying time. And so what if you didn't finish it in four days? Relax! Allow more time next time.) Am I really worried about what my mother will say? (No, because I'm the one who has to look at it every day.) So the solution? Step one is to paint the trim first and then re-evaluate. Using a method of reflection to think back over my "draft" gives me a method for proceeding with "revision." At the risk of sounding like a pop song, when you stop to think it through, you'll know what to do.

Revision isn't just in writing. These methods can be applied any time you are working on a project—of any kind—or have to make decisions about something. Establishing the habit of reflective thinking will have far-reaching benefits in your education, your career, and your life. It's an essential key to success for the life-long learner.

Discussion

1. Define what metacognitive or reflective writing is. What are some of the prompts or "topics" for reflective writing?
2. Have you ever been asked to do this type of writing? If so, briefly discuss your experience.
3. Why does reflective writing help a student learn and develop as a better writer? How does it work?
4. Draft a Letter to the Reader for an essay you are

working on right now. Analyze the letter to see what strengths or problems it uncovers regarding your essay.

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Attributions

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FIND THE BEST TOOLS FOR THE JOB: EXPERIMENTING WITH WRITING WORKFLOWS

Derek Van Ittersum and Tim Lockridge

Abstract

Derek Van Ittersum and Tim Lockridge's article from *Writing Spaces,* "Find the Best Tools for the Job," introduces "writing workflows," a concept that helps writers examine how tools shape writing processes. It

suggests that writing does not take place solely in the mind, with the tools merely transcribing that activity. Instead, it describes how any experience of writing is shaped by tools. Writing with a software application that supports you and your way of working, instead of opposing you, can make a big difference. Thus, if you want to enjoy writing more, to learn more from it, or to feel more supported in it, you might benefit from reflecting on your writing workflows and experimenting with a variety of tools (and ways of using those tools). Included in the chapter are several reflection prompts, as well as a larger activity asking you to annotate the chapter itself using different tools and practices and then to reflect on each workflow.

Read the text below or as a PDF.

Think back to the last time you held an object that fit perfectly in your hand. A broken-in baseball glove. The contoured handle of a chef's knife. A game controller with smooth curving sides. How do you feel when you're holding one of these? Maybe ready and excited to make a catch, cook a meal, or play a game. Or perhaps just quietly satisfied. As writing teachers, we think this collection of feelings is undervalued when it comes to writing. Although some writers find pleasure in a fancy pen or a special notebook, many people simply reach for the nearest available tools. By tools, we mean the objects you choose to write with: perhaps a pen and paper, or maybe a laptop and Google Docs or Microsoft Word. With this chapter, we'd like to suggest that the tools you use to write with matter, and your use of those tools can productively change your experience of writing.

To make that case, we want to introduce a new term for thinking about writing—*the writing workflow*. A writing workflow describes the tools and the process used for a writing task. For example, Derek wrote this paragraph on his laptop in an app called Drafts and then pasted the paragraph into a shared Google Doc. Tim printed this paragraph, revised and added sentences using an ink pen (an orange Uni-Ball Signo DX, to be precise), and then typed those revisions in the shared Google Doc. After using a chat app (Slack) to discuss the revisions with Tim, Derek saved the Google Doc as a Word file, edited the formatting, and submitted it to the editors for review. The tools, then, are the laptop, the Drafts app, Google Docs, paper, an orange ink pen, Slack, and Microsoft Word. The process describes how those tools were used to write this paragraph.

However, this business-like description of the process does not fully reflect our experience of writing the introduction. Nearly anything Derek writes starts in the Drafts app, either as a scrap of an idea dictated by voice into an iPhone or typed on a laptop. These notes sync between devices where Derek can easily merge or split them, and he can paste them into a word processor, convert them to a reminder, or decide they're a bad idea and delete them. For Derek, Drafts is that broken-in baseball glove. Tim, meanwhile, often writes on paper because he likes how free form it is: he can rotate it in different directions, he can draw, he can scribble in the margins, and he can give the page a satisfying crumple when he's stuck. But he also uses paper alongside an outline on his computer, which helps him see the bigger picture and rearrange it as his ideas change. For Tim, the outline is like a recipe and paper is a trusty cutting board. A workflow, then, is not just a bare description of the tools and how they are used, but it is also a loose collection of feelings and memories and mind states evoked or supported by those tools.

This chapter won't suggest that you craft the singular, perfect workflow because writing tasks are situational, contextual, and ever changing, and there isn't a single writing process that always yields best results. Likewise, a tool and process that works well for one task may not fit another. Workflows help us see this, and they help us best match a writing task with a set of tools and our preferred ways of working. But workflows also help us imagine the possibilities offered by different tools and new approaches. We hope to show you how thinking about your tools, processes, and preferences can help you better understand your workflows—and make your writing process more enjoyable. In this chapter, we will explore the concept of the writing workflow in more detail, first by examining writing tools and how they can change what it feels like to write. Next, we'll define writing workflows in more detail and guide you through a few activities to get you thinking about your own tools and workflows.

Writing Tools and Mediation

Writing is a mediated activity. When we say mediated activity, we mean that writing is an activity that requires tools, and when people use different tools (or the same tools in different ways) the activity can change dramatically. It is easy to imagine writing as strictly a mental activity: we think hard about our great ideas and arguments, we transcribe those thoughts, and we turn them in to our teacher. But in this chapter we want to suggest the opposite. Writing is primarily an activity mediated by tools, and different tools can change the activity.

Tools and mediation affect how we think about our work. We often recognize different types of writing by the required attributes of the final product. Your philosophy professor might want a ten page, double-spaced document in Times New Roman, and your business professor might ask for a ten minute spoken presentation delivered alongside a PowerPoint file. That doesn't mean, however, that you need to begin your process in a document or in slides. Instead, by experimenting with different tools in your writing process, you might find that you're better able to think through complex problems, that you can more easily revise, or that you simply find the act of writing a bit more pleasant.

An example might help. The educational psychologist James Wertsch studies how people learn and has been a key figure in developing this theory of mediated activity. He uses pole vaulting as a way to illustrate how new tools can dramatically change an activity. In a previous era, pole vaulters used bamboo poles to fling themselves over the bar. Later, fiberglass poles—which are much springier than bamboo ones—were introduced to the sport. Because fiberglass poles bend, the pole vaulter can use the pole's springiness to propel themselves over a much higher bar. A champion pole vaulter from the bamboo era flatly refused to use a fiberglass pole, saying that it changed the activity too much, calling it a circus trick.

Just like pole vaulting, writing went through a distinctive shift in the tools used. In the late 1980s and 1990s, most writers transitioned from some kind of print technology (pen & paper, typewriter) to computers. In his history of word processing, Matthew Kirschenbaum describes how some writers quickly adopted computers for writing and how others were resistant. He quotes the writer Paul Aster, who first composes with a pen and later types his drafts because "Keyboards have always intimidated me. I've never been able to think clearly with my fingers in that position. A pen is a much more primitive instrument. You feel that the words are coming out of your body and then you dig the words into the page." Aster uses a typewriter and says "there is no point talking about computers and word processors" because of the risk of pushing the wrong button and losing a day's work (qtd. in Kirschenbaum 21). Kirschenbaum also describes how Joyce Carol Oates first writes in longhand and then uses a typewriter to finish her drafts, because the typewriter is "a rather alien thing—a thing of formality and impersonality" (qtd. in Kirschenbaum 22).

If you're used to writing on a computer, tablet, or smartphone, you might think these perspectives are the old-timey views of people who don't like digital technology. And in the 1980s and '90s, there were plenty of questions about how computers would change writing, and some writers preferred to stick with pen and paper. But writing with a computer is different from writing with a pen and paper or typewriter. At the most superficial level, you can edit the text on a computer screen without needing to retype the whole document. Even this simple change can lead to very different approaches to writing. Some writers might struggle with a word processor because they can easily and endlessly rewrite the first sentence of a document. Other writers may feel more willing to revise their documents because it is easy to edit them, which means they can try out activities like freewriting, where you just type without stopping for a set period of time in order to generate ideas or get to a rough first draft.

As Wertsch suggests, neither tools alone nor the person and their skills can fully explain mediated activity: "The pole by itself does not magically propel vaulters over a cross bar; it must be used skillfully by the agent. At the same time, an agent without a pole or with an inappropriate pole is incapable of participating in the event" (Wertsch 27). As writers, we cannot select a magic writing tool that makes the challenging task of writing simple. Yet, we also cannot write well with tools that are inappropriate for the task. Finding appropriate tools means understanding what different writing tools can do.

Computer interface designers often refer to the different functions of a specific tool or technology using the term "affordances." If the tool will do a specific task in a specific environment, we say that the tool "affords" it. For example, a ballpoint pen affords writing on paper. But it doesn't afford writing on glass well—you'd need to use a marker for that. Additionally, it's hard to write with a pen on paper without a hard surface—the environment matters too. The concept of affordances is useful because it describes things tools can do that exceed what the designers of the tool may have intended. A heavy wooden chair affords sitting, for instance, but it also affords blocking a door, burning, lion taming, and blanket fort building. Similarly, computer software is built with certain features designed for certain actions, but there are typically more affordances available. Therefore, one of the ways to improve your writing is to find tools that afford productive writing practices and learn to use these affordances.

Of course, your friend may tell you about an incredible new writing app that helps them stay focused on their writing, but you might find it frustrating and annoying to use. Different people react differently to tools and their affordances. Many pole vaulters found the new springy fiberglass poles great, but some preferred the way the bamboo poles worked, even if they couldn't go as high. Something about the experience of springing over the bar wasn't as appealing. Some writers find the fluidity of writing with a word processor on a computer freeing, while others find it paralyzing because they find themselves deleting or fixing each sentence as they write it and not making any forward progress.

Some critics might dismiss these different responses to tools as trivial differences in taste. Regardless of what tools people want to use, a critic might say, the larger activity is the same—people are still flinging themselves over a high bar or producing written documents. However, we find that this perspective ignores an important aspect of activity: our affective experience. Affect, the designer Don Norman says, is "the queasy, uneasy feeling you might experience, without knowing why" (11). Affect is sometimes described as the feeling you have before you identify it as a specific emotion (like happy, sad, angry).

We would argue that people who don't want to use springy fiberglass poles for vaulting do not enjoy the affective experience of springing. We also believe that affective responses to activities and tools matter. If someone is able to produce a written document using a set of tools and practices, but they have a sharply negative affective experience, then that affective reaction has either reduced the quality of that document or will do so eventually, as the writer finds the activity more and more unpleasant over time. If you find that writing with the tools everyone else uses or in the ways your previous teachers demanded has led to some negative affect, you may have resigned yourself to the idea that maybe you just don't like writing. We hope that this chapter changes your mind and encourages you to experiment with other tools and practices that may lead to other affective reactions.

Short Activity: Describing Your Writing Tools

Think of something you've recently written: a class assignment, a short story, a journal entry, or maybe a simple note to self. List and describe the tools you used when writing. Did you write in a Google Document? If so, what type of device did you write on? What did you name the file? How did you organize it? Was it a one-off note or do you hope to find it again? Or maybe you wrote on a piece of paper. If so, what kind of paper? Was it loose leaf, in a binder, or in a notebook? Did you use a pencil or pen?

Next, think about this process. Why did you select these tools? For how long have you used them? When did you start using them? Are you using these tools in the "official" way or are you using them for tasks the designers may not have imagined? What is your affective response to them?

In a small group, share your answers with your classmates. Listen to how others describe their workflows, and consider how those workflows complement and contrast with your own.

Writing Workflows

Now, when we say we want you to focus on the tools of writing, we don't mean that you should do this every time you sit down to write. After all, as the writing researcher Christina Haas remarked: "Writing would be inefficient and almost prohibitively difficult if writers had to constantly and consciously attend to their writing tools. Imagine using a pencil in which the lead broke every fourth or fifth word, or imagine learning a new word processing program each time you sat down to create a document" (xi). So if we don't want you to learn a new word processing program before every writing session, what are we saying?

It's likely that when you write, you follow a series of similar steps using the same tools. For example, one of us, Derek, starts writing projects by recording ideas in a mind mapping/outlining application on the Mac. This application, called Tinderbox, displays each idea as a separate card that can be moved around on a wide space, allowing him to group ideas together loosely and rearrange them easily. Eventually, these loose groupings become more solid and can be rendered as an outline in Tinderbox, and then printed or opened directly in a word processor. Derek doesn't always go through this process the same way for every project, but this generally describes how he starts writing. Tim, on the other hand, likes to begin in flexible outliner tools like Workflowy and Dynalist that let him quickly write down thoughts, phrases, and sentence fragments in unordered lists. Tim will freewrite ideas until he sees a pattern take shape, and he will then organize the list items into groups and sequences. Once he's comfortable with an initial structure, Tim will start writing on legal pads with a pen, returning to the outliner software as he revises and moves toward a first draft. We call these kinds of repeated writing processes "writing workflows." A writing workflow defines the steps and tools a writer uses to move through a writing task or project.

A "workflow" is a common term in business contexts, often referring to a standard process the business follows for accomplishing tasks. Our use of the term refers to a process that is more fluid, because we want to highlight how each writing situation might require or benefit from slight or major adjustments to one's typical writing workflow. For example, consider a student who has always written papers in a word processor from beginning to end—starting with the introduction and finishing with the conclusion, often in one sitting. Imagine this student is now in a senior capstone course and required to write a 50-page report that spans many drafts and assignments. This is not the type of document that can be written in one sitting, and it would be challenging to write it from start to finish—the writer might find it easier to start in the middle and do the introduction later, when they are more sure about the scope of the report. While many writers recognize that new situations like this require new ways of working, they often try to shoehorn their old tools and practices to fit these new ways. While this hypothetical writer might realize it is easiest to start writing in the middle, they may continue to use the same word processor and just work with a single file as they are used to doing. But this writer might feel overwhelmed when what seemed like the middle of the paper becomes the second of five sections, or when that section later turns into a series of footnotes. Other tools or practices could help this writer deal with complex revisions in new and different ways.

Recognizing the limits of one's workflow for varying situations is a key part of maturing as a writer. Both of us write daily, but our writing tasks differ from day to day and month to month, and we have developed several different workflows that accommodate these variations.

Changing Your Writing Workflow

So how can you know whether a writing situation requires any adjustments to your writing workflow? Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast rules here. Over time, you can develop an instinct for distinguishing between when it will pay off to learn new techniques or tools and when it's best to continue with what has worked in the past. However, the only way you can learn this is to become sensitive to the demands that each new writing situation is making. Even if you decide in any specific instance to keep your writing workflow the same, this should be a deliberate decision instead of a default assumption.

One way to increase your sensitivity and develop this instinct is to deliberately look for aspects of your workflow that are frustrating. In our research on professional writers who attend carefully to their tools and workflows, we found that these writers often talked about encountering "friction" in their workflows. For them, friction referred to any set of tools or processes that seemed to take more effort or time than warranted. These were writers with significant expertise with computer technologies and were able to write computer scripts (essentially mini computer programs) that would automate certain repeated processes they did over and over as part of their work. Any time they noticed that they were doing the same set of steps more than a few times (say, writing an email to a customer who had experienced difficulties downloading a digital book), they would create a script that would automatically complete that process (the script would use a template to draft the email and create a few free download codes for the customer, all with the writer just pressing one button).

But friction—and its remedies—can extend beyond tools, and you don't need computer expertise to find or resolve it. For example, Alex Borowitz, one of Tim's former students, produced a short, stylistic video about writing in which a frustrated writer finds focus and inspiration in a campus garden (Borowitz). Many writers have shared a similar experience and have found commonplace solutions to environmental friction: taking a walk or folding laundry or making a cup of coffee. If you know how to search for friction, you can sometimes find that what initially seems like procrastination is actually a habitual response to the friction in your writing workflow. And smoothing out that friction might require you to recognize that your desk or room just isn't conducive to writing, or that you don't have a good system for working with a longer writing project that will go through multiple versions.

Short Activity: Finding Friction

First, divide a piece of paper or a digital document into three columns. Label the left column "Friction," the middle column "Source," and the right column "Change."

Next, think about a recent writing task you completed (you can use the same one from the previous activity). Where in that writing task did you experience friction? Which parts were the most annoying? Which took longer—or more effort—than they should? Which tasks caused you to stop working? List these in the "Friction" column.

For each item in the friction column, identify the source of that friction and list it in the middle column. Maybe it was difficult to find a file or website. Maybe the white background of the writing app was too bright. Maybe the library website wasn't working. Or maybe it was hard to keep your research notes in view as you were summarizing them in your paper.

Once you've identified a moment of friction and its source, imagine ways of replacing it and list them in the "Changes" column. You might change the default settings of the app you're using (to make the background darker, for instance). You might try a different app altogether, or you might switch to pen and paper. As you make these notes, pay attention to your affective responses. Are you interested in this change? Does it make you feel more relaxed? Could it help you work in a different environment or at a different time?

Finally, share your three-column document with a small group. What do you notice about the friction that others have identified? Do you share similar sources of friction? Do any of their changes align with yours?

Long Activity: Finding an Annotation Workflow

One way to better understand how your writing tools shape your workflows is to try different tools on a low stakes task. This activity asks you to use several approaches to annotation and then consider how the tools shaped your work (and how, in turn, your work might shape future uses of that tool).

You have likely had a teacher tell you the importance of annotating or notetaking while reading. Maybe they encouraged you to underline key terms, highlight important sentences, or make notes in the margins of the text. But how do you do that? And what happens when you choose to annotate or take notes with one tool over another?

If you're working with a print copy of an assigned reading, you might choose to underline passages in pen, perhaps with a color that's different from the text in the article, to help you better see your underlines. If you're working with a library book, you might use Post-It notes rather than write directly on the page. And if you're working with a digital copy of the text, you might use a software solution (like the annotation tools in a PDF app) or find the nearest campus printer.

But how do you make these choices, and why? Is convenience your primary concern? (The closest campus printer is in the library, and that's a ten minute walk…) Or does focus matter more? (You find it easier to read and concentrate on the screen rather than printed pages.) Are there other factors that inform your choices?

This activity asks you to consider those choices and to examine what happens when you work with a different set of tools.

Step 1: Annotate According to Your Teacher's Instruction

Re-read the first section of this chapter and annotate it as suggested by your instructor. Depending on you and your classmates dis/abilities, they might suggest using a print-out and highlighter, a digital annotation feature in Adobe Acrobat, or some other method that is accessible to all students. Either before you start reading, or while you're reading, decide on a few types of markings or notes that will help you better remember why you've annotated something. For example, you could draw a star in the margin next to important paragraphs if you're taking physical notes You could use a specific kind of highlighter in a digital app. You could write or type a question mark next to something you don't understand. Keep a legend somewhere to help you remember the meaning of each type of marking or note.

Step 2: Annotate in a Separate Document

Re-read the second section of this chapter and continue to annotate using your teacher's instructed method, but do so in a separate document (either physical or digital). Try to mark the same types of information that you did in

Step 1 (for example, main points, interesting statements, points of confusion, keywords, etc.), but do so without writing directly in the chapter document. Try to develop a similar system—how can you annotate, take notes, and return to the sentence or paragraph you're annotating?

Step 3: Now Try Your Own Method

Now explore a completely new method, different from the one your instructor showed you. Depending on your own learning style and preference, you might use a different digital annotation tool, or a method for doing annotations on a printed page. Develop or expand your previous system for annotating, including ways of marking different types of passages.

Questions/Discussion

In a small group, share your process for the above steps and discuss the following questions.

- Which of the three steps worked best for you? Which seemed easiest? Which best matched your preferred style of working? Why?
- How might you use your annotations to write a short paper? Which annotation method would be easiest to refer to? Why? What if you were writing a much longer paper?
- Could you teach someone your process? How would you do so?
- After seeing the annotation strategies used by your classmates, how might you change your

process? What changes would you adopt? How might they help?

Conclusion

Research about reading has shown us that highlighting and annotating while you read—what we call an "active reading" strategy—can improve your focus. But it's also possible to use active reading strategies mindlessly. You could, for example, highlight the first sentence of every paragraph because a teacher once required it. Doing so without a purpose or strategy might help you see where paragraphs begin and end but tell you little about the ideas contained within them.

Writers can make the same mistakes with their workflows. They might adopt a new notebook or popular piece of software because they read a glowing review of it or because they saw a friend successfully use it. That initial inspiration is important, and it can help us find new ways of working. But much like highlighting without a purpose, it's easy to adopt a tool—or even an entire workflow—without asking why it's beneficial to do so. If a teacher requires us to turn in a paper in Microsoft Word format, we might default to using that tool for the entire project. And when we mindlessly adopt tools and practices, we are missing important questions about how we work, how we might improve, or how we can make a process more enjoyable. To extend James Wertsch's metaphor, when we don't examine mediation and practice we are grabbing whatever tool is convenient, heading to the track and field competition, and hoping we break the pole vaulting record.

But the inverse is also possible. Some writers find a process and tool that works well enough and stick with it for years. And perhaps this is the best possible configuration of tools and activity for them. But if they don't occasionally ask questions of their tools and examine what else might be possible, they might miss new ways of working or new affective possibilities.

A writing workflow, on the other hand, offers an alternative practice. It gives you a way to ask questions about your work, such as *Why am I highlighting? Why am I using this method of highlighting? Why am I highlighting particular passages instead of others? And how will this highlighting practice help me later?* By looking at your workflow, you can examine how you're approaching the work of writing and ask how your tools are shaping that approach.

To do so, start by thinking about mediation, affect, and friction. Ask:

- What tools am I using? Why am I using them? How do they encourage specific types of working or working in specific spaces? What might I gain by adding a new tool to my process or replacing another?
- What parts of my process are bothersome? When do I enjoy writing the least? When do I feel friction? When am I most likely to step away from my writing? How might this be related to my tools or my process?
- What parts of my process are most enjoyable? What tools do I like to use the most? Do I find

myself tinkering? If so, when and why?

Rather than describing some idealized workflow or "best practices" for tools or apps, we conclude this chapter by asking you to look at your writing activity in a new light. If your goals have been related to efficiency (such as getting the paper done as quickly as possible), consider that these goals may be covering over some negative affect—there's something you don't like about the process of writing, so you want to finish it as quickly as possible. Perhaps your experience has been like the champion pole vaulter: the tools you're using spring you up high over the bar, but you just don't like it. It might be that you would enjoy more the way a less flexible pole works, even if it doesn't take you as high (or let you finish as quickly). And if you enjoy it more—or learn more from it, or develop new interests as a result—maybe taking more time isn't such a problem! By better understanding affect, friction, and mediation, you can develop workflows that will help you see your writing activity in new and creative ways.

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Attributions

49.

WHAT'S THE DIFF? VERSION HISTORY AND REVISION REFLECTIONS

Benjamin Miller

Abstract

Benjamin Miller's essay from *Writing Spaces,* "What's the Diff? Version History and Revision Reflections," recommends that writers use digital tools to keep track of what's changing as they write—and to include a quick comment with each notable change, saying what they're trying to achieve. These revisitable

histories are helpful in several ways. First, when we notice what we're changing (often unconsciously) on a small scale, like words and phrases, we can think through our reasons for those changes—and then ask if similar reasoning, and similar revision strategies, might also apply at larger scales of paragraphs and beyond. Second, by sharing and discussing these reasons and strategies, we expand our repertoire of revision moves, moving further along the spectrum from novice to expert. Third, if our writing is interrupted—whether by other classes or by world or life events—re-reading the revision notes can help writers recapture momentum and pick up where we left off. And finally, recording what's changing helps us see and celebrate small victories, and realize that there really is progress happening, even when it might not look like it. For example, if each new draft is a scrap-and-start-over of the same three paragraphs until we've clarified our goals for the essay, revision histories can show the progress that word counts alone would leave invisible. Without tracking these mid-draft changes, writers' celebrations can otherwise feel delayed until the project is over, or until a grade comes back—or, worse, never. Noticing and naming progress can generate feelings of interim success to keep ourselves going through difficult stages in the writing process.

Read the text below or as a PDF.

Introduction

Whether you know it or not, you revise as you write. Even if you produce a first draft and never come back to it, something tells me you at least look back at the sentence you're in the middle of, and sometimes the sentences and paragraphs before that, so you know whether your current thought actually follows on the previous one. Or maybe one of your teachers made a point of telling you to write a rough draft, put the paper away for a while, and come back to it; in that case, you're probably even more aware of revising. But I'll also bet that even within each of those sessions, you were in the middle of saying one thing and thought of a better idea, or a better way of saying it—so you erased, you went back to the middle or beginning of the line, and you restructured it. The writing led to a better understanding, which led you to change what you were writing. And that's *revision*. In this essay, I want to help you understand revision better. I want to help you think through what you do with words and sentences, because what we do within sentences we can also do with paragraphs, pages, and even larger chunks of writing. Studies have shown that expert writers revise on those large scales more than beginners do, so learning to think big is part of how we grow our expertise as writers. And the tool I recommend for seeing revision better is *version history*. You may know it better as *track changes*, or (if you're into computer programming) *diffs view*, but the basic idea is this: (1) use digital tools to visibly mark what's changed in your writing from one moment to another; (2) add a note that says what that change is meant to accomplish, or where it gets you; (3) reread the notes later on.

Visibly Marked Changes

Before we can talk about what you'll learn in studying your own version histories, I want to make sure we're all on the same page about what I'm describing, and why I find these histories so interesting. Example 1 shows a simple example of a *diff*, a comparison between two adjacent versions of this document. In this case, I generated it with Google Docs, using the File menu to select See Version History. But there are lots of tools you could use; pretty much any word processor these days can compare files, and most can compare versions within the same file. Leaving tool choice aside for now, let's look at the diff together. You should recognize the context: the sentence is taken from the second paragraph above.

Example 1: Substitution at the level of words

> And studies have shown that expert writers revise on those large scales more than beginners do, so learning to think big is part of how ~~you~~ **we** grow ~~y~~our expertise as ~~a~~ writer**s**.

Not earth-shattering, I know; just a slight shift in wording, from *you* to *we*, from *your* to *our*. But a change doesn't have to be massive to be meaningful. What I meant to accomplish with the change in pronouns was to change my sense of relationship to you as a reader: by including myself in the group that's growing, I signal that I'm still learning, too—including by writing this essay and reflecting on my version history. That's why I'm drawing on examples from this piece, so you can see *how* I'm learning, and what it gets me. True, I'm not exactly a novice, either: I've been publishing and teaching writers for almost two decades; I do think about large-scale changes and restructuring. But as this example shows, thinking about the large scales doesn't mean you stop fiddling with sentences and words as you get more experience.

It might, though, mean you think more about how the small and the large are related, and that's one of the big things studying your version history can help you do. For example, when I think about my reason for that small change above, *you* to *we*, it raises a question that applies to the essay as a whole: what *is* my relationship with readers? And what follows if I'm not separating myself from the lessons I'm trying to impart? For one thing, my examples might shift from things other people have written about to the things I have found concretely helpful, things that don't depend on already having a large revision repertoire. It might mean, in fact, spending more time with the word-level edits we all make, and demonstrating how they can themselves lead to high-level rethinking. And so, here we are: all six paragraphs you just read are entirely new additions. Not a bad outcome for a few small tweaks!

For the change in Example 1, the structure of the sentence stayed the same: the main move was one of *substitution* in place, one pronoun for another. But even within a single paragraph, structural changes are possible. Example 2 shows a diff view from an earlier draft of this essay. I'd written the paragraph in one order, then decided that the last sentence made a better lead sentence—so I switched them around.

Example 2. Reordering at the level of sentences

> […] it's an experiment everyone can do: are your changes changing as you study writing and get more focused practice and feedback?
>
> ~~But it's not always easy, in the thick of the writing or after pushing through the thicket, to remember what turns you took, or why; sometimes the new versions just replace what you'd done before, whether figuratively in your memory or literally on your hard drive.~~ In this essay, I want to make the case for using *version control* technology to help track and make visible what's changing in the course of a writing project, so you can then assess how "what changes" has changed in the course of a writing class. **<u>Because it's not always easy, in the thick of the writing or after pushing through the thicket, to remember what turns you took, or why; sometimes the new versions just replace what you'd done before, whether figuratively in your memory or literally on your hard drive.</u>**

Reordering to highlight main ideas or improve transitions is a strategy worth knowing, if you don't already. But there's also another, related, change in Example 2 that might be obscured by the movement of the full sentence. Do you see it? Between the deleted version (struck through) and the inserted version (underlined), the first word of the sentence changed. In its original position, the idea that "it's not always easy" was a contrast with what came before, a turn, and so I wrote it "but"-first; within the paragraph, though, the two ideas go together, so "but" became "because." Thinking through the reasoning here, we can develop a two-part revision strategy: *First, consider whether a position change makes sense; second, reassess transitions in light of the new position.*

As I said above, the small-scale strategies you can see in these diffs are often worth trying at larger scales. So, knowing that you can reorder sentences within a paragraph, you should start to realize you can reorder whole paragraphs, too. Example 3 shows the whole original paragraph from Example 2 switching places with its neighbor:

Example 3. Reordering at the level of paragraphs

> […] to help in future writing projects, I'm more interested in what strategies they used to revise – and in expanding the strategies they have experience with.
>
> ~~But it's not always easy, in the thick of the writing or after pushing through the thicket, to remember what turns you took, or why; sometimes the new versions just replace what you'd done before, whether figuratively in your memory or literally on your hard drive. In this essay, I want to make the case for using version control technology to help keep track of what's changing in the course of a writing project, so you can then assess how "what changes" has changed in the course of a writing class.~~
>
> For instance, in one of the classic studies of writing process, Nancy Sommers found that beginning student writers tended to make changes at the level of word, phrase, and sentence, and that most of the word/phrase changes were substitutions that didn't change the overall structure or meaning. Expert writers, on the other hand, tended to make more changes at larger-than-paragraph levels, like theme or section, and they did a lot more cutting and reordering. So it's an experiment everyone can do: are your

> changes changing as you study writing and get more focused practice and feedback?
>
> **But it's not always easy, in the thick of the writing or after pushing through the thicket, to remember what turns you took, or why; sometimes the new versions just replace what you'd done before, whether figuratively in your memory or literally on your hard drive. In this essay, I want to make the case for using version control technology to help keep track of what's changing in the course of a writing project, so you can then assess how "what changes" has changed in the course of a writing class.**

According to our two-part strategy from sentence reordering, after we've tried a new position we should reassess transitions in the new position. For sentences, "transitions" meant words or phrases ("but," "because"); scaling up to paragraphs, transitions could be whole sentences. In fact, checking transitions after the paragraph-level reordering helped me realize the "but" was no longer working; the sentence-level reordering in Example 2 was itself a smoothing operation after the paragraph switch. This suggests another strategy: *What you learn at one scale, try applying at another*. Note that I don't mean just small to large; sometimes the learning works in both directions.

Noteworthy Changes Deserve a Worthy Note

Not every diff is so straightforward as the ones shown above: see Example 4, which shows a whole tangle of revisions as I worked through how to talk about the changes in my draft.

Example 4. A more complicated diff to interpret (so maybe not one for the history books)

> That's not to say you'll stop fiddling with sentences **and words** as you get more experience. **I've written plenty over the years, but** ~~I~~**i**n those first two paragraphs alone, I ~~count~~**can see** at least seven ~~edits~~ **word-level changes** that shifted the emphasis or clarified what I meant~~,~~. ~~edits that feel important enough to me as a writer to name:~~ Some wording changes are powerful. ~~For example changed pronouns, including myself by changing you to we in the ;~~ ~~I added new~~ ? **The last sentence of paragraph two used to talk about "how you grow your expertise as a writer," until I acknowledged that I'm still growing, so I changed the pronouns to include myself.**

I went from planning a list of seven edits to choosing one to focus on; I tried describing some edits as "important" in a single word, then as a whole expanded phrase, then cut both. This moment in the revision process was kind of a mess, really. Why show it to you, then? A few reasons.

First, to make sure I'm not overstating my claim or setting you up for confusion. The truth is, not *every* diff is important or a source of great insight. Sometimes, the best response is to acknowledge that drafting is messy, and move on. Second, following from that truth, the moments that *do* feel like accomplishments are worth marking, so you can find them again later. (See Figure 1, below, where several revisions are marked with notes, and the less interesting moments in the history are marked simply as dates.)

Luckily, many writing tools with version trackers let you add "named versions" within the file's history.[1] You can use these names to say where you are relative to some point in the process, as in "first draft" or "500 words to go"; or, even better, you can use the notes to briefly describe what's changing, and why. A note like "first draft" doesn't tell you, if you look back at it later, how far you'd gotten by the first draft. By contrast, a note like "reorder Sommers quote from third page to first" or "finished section on barracudas" tells you what you've actually done. A glance back through a series of such notes when the essay is complete can help you call to mind all the highlights of your process and reflect on what you learned—or what you want to ask for feedback on.

1. In LibreOffice, you can find the option to name a save under File > Versions… > Save New Version; in Google Docs, timestamps saved automatically under File > Version History can be renamed (though only 40 per document). One version tracker popular among programmers and technical writers, called git, tracks only these named versions, which it calls "commits." I kind of love the energy of that: it's like, "Okay, I know you've saved this file, but are you ready to commit to it? Is this an official version you'd want to look at again later?"

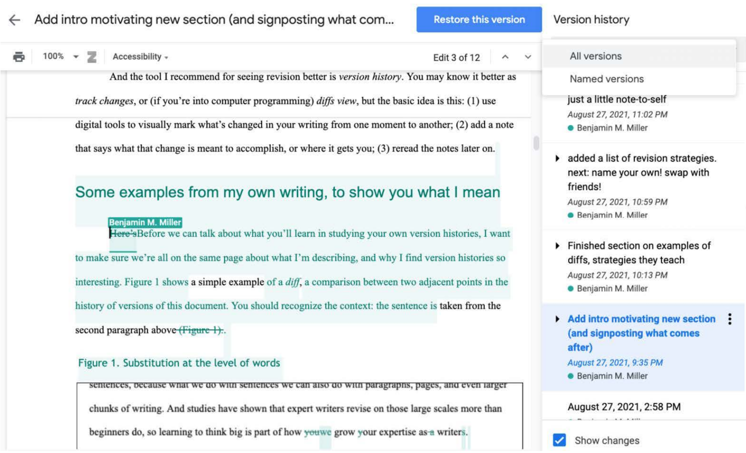

Figure 1. One form of annotated revision history ("named versions"), from a
Google Docs version of this chapter. Even the limited space of the annotation
allows various kinds of notes: descriptions of what's changed ("Finished section
on examples of diffs"), status updates ("Just a little note to self"), plans for future
working sessions ("next: name your own! swap with friends!"), etc. Screenshot
shows a list of five timestamped versions of a document, with labels including text
quoted in the figure caption. An option to show only named versions is unselected.
Screenshot by author.

But even before the essay is complete, these notes can be powerful. Pausing to describe what you were just working on—even pausing to decide *whether* to describe what you were working on—opens up a space for reflection. Version notes invite you to think actively about how you're writing, whether to save a move you just made for future reference or to compare your present writing situation to others you've been in before. And that kind of metacognition, or thinking about your thinking, has been found to be important in developing expertise (*How People Learn* 50, 18).

What's more, if your writing is interrupted (life happens), version notes can be a place to lay down tracks for yourself to return to. Scrolling through just the noteworthy moments when you get back, you might well recover the momentum you had when you left off, allowing you to resume midstream rather than just read the whole draft from the top. Paul Ford, writing in the *New York Times* about open source software, had a memorable take on this kind of process recap. He wrote, "I read the change logs, and I think: humans can do things." If you find yourself in the grip of writer's block, version notes can offer a reminder: you, a writer, can do things.

Looking Back to Look Forward

I'm taking the phrase "revision strategies" from one of the classic studies of writing processes, by Nancy Sommers. By comparing early and late drafts in two groups of writers, she identified four recurring "operations"—addition, subtraction, substitution, and reordering—taking place at four different "levels" of text: word, phrase, sentence, and "theme (the extended statement of one idea)" (Sommers 380). Most interestingly for practical purposes, she found a difference between the two groups based on their experience level. Beginning student writers tended to make changes on the scale of words, phrases, and sentences, and most of the word/phrase changes were substitutions: they didn't change the overall structure or even meaning, since a lot of the substituted words were synonyms. Professional adult writers made small changes, too, but also tended to go beyond—they made more changes at larger-than-paragraph levels, like theme or section, and they did a lot more cutting and reordering.

Their revision *goals* were different, too: the student writers in Sommers's study mostly wanted to "clean up" their early drafts (381), while the experienced writers talked about taking their drafts apart to find the heart of the argument (383-4)—in a sense, using revision to "rough up" the earlier draft and make something better from the pieces. Sommers's experiment was a long time ago, but it's an experiment you can repeat even more easily now, with your own writing: When you have to revisit a first draft, do you look for ways to "clean it up"? Or do you ask yourself what else, what next idea or better explanation, the draft helps you figure out?

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What do you think your revision history would have to say about it? It's worth asking, because what we think we're doing and what the evidence shows aren't always the same. In 2018, Heather Lindenman and colleagues published a study comparing students' drafts with reflective memos they'd written about them. They found that many students claimed to have learned new revision skills in their first-year writing courses, but those revision moves weren't actually there when the researchers looked at the diffs. As the authors put it, "students articulated improved writing knowledge in their memos—they talked the talk—but they did not enact it in their revisions—they did not walk the walk" (589). So if you feel like you've realized something new this semester about how to improve your writing, it's worth checking to see if it's actually showing up in your latest drafts. What you expect is changing in your writing, or what you hope is changing, may or may not be visible there.

It's not always easy, in the thick of the writing, to remember what turns you took, or why; sometimes the new versions just replace what you'd done before, whether figuratively in your memory or literally on your hard drive. Using version history can help you keep track of what you've done throughout the course of a writing project, so you can then assess how your strategies have changed—and where they might be useful again in the future.

So before you write a final reflection, on either that piece of writing or a whole course, you'd do well to grab some evidence from your revision history. Or, if you find it's not there yet, you can start making some new history now.

The More Strategies, the Merrier

To find more revision strategies, you may only have to start looking at drafts where something really clicked—where you know your revisions really improved the final product. But to get the most out of it, work with a group. If you share what you find among peers, classmates, or other writing partners, the chances increase that everyone will pick up something new.

In the interest of such sharing, here are a few moves I've noticed recurring in my diffs:

- *Thickening*. Add a new sentence between two existing ones, e.g. to add more detail to an otherwise general statement. Especially useful around quotations that need more context.
- *Prying open*. The scaled-up, paragraph-level version of thickening: add a whole new paragraph between existing paragraphs, e.g. to insert a more concrete example of an abstract idea, or to acknowledge and respond to some possible misreading. Also works with sections (see Example 6).
- *Regrouping*. Sometimes, instead of new material, all you need is a change

in punctuation. Adding a period (or a paragraph break) can sometimes let your readers catch their breath and fully understand one thought before you ask them to move on (see Example 5). Section headings can do the same at a larger scale (see Example 6). Conversely, substituting a semicolon for a period can emphasize how closely two ideas are related.

- *Reframing*. Add new material at the beginning of the draft (or paragraph, or section) with the goal of helping readers see how the existing material fits into a larger conversation; see Example 7, below. Note that this could also be considered a scaled-up version of a traditional sentence-level strategy like *adding transitions*.
- *Removing the scaffolding*. Kind of the opposite of reframing: delete preparatory passages that aren't part of the actual building / idea, even though you couldn't have built it without them.
- *Making it explicit.* Add new material at the end of a sentence, paragraph, or section to explain the significance or consequence of what you just said.

Say outright what you thought was implied the first time.

- *Fine-tuning*. Substitute individual words to adjust their overtones, so they better match your intended root meaning. (For example, I wanted "overtones" in that sentence rather than "associations," because "overtones" is associated with music and reinforces the musical aspect of "tuning.")

To find these, as I said, I went through my version history and tried to (a) describe the changes I saw, and (b) explain what I hoped each change would accomplish. You can do the same, especially if you already took notes as you went along to mark the revisions of which you're the most proud.

Example 5. Regrouping at the sentence level (replacing colon with period)

> In this essay, I want to help you see revision better:. I want to help you think through what you do with sentences, because what we do with sentences we can also do with paragraphs, pages, and even larger chunks of writing.

Example 6. Regrouping to carve out an extra section within an existing one

> **~~The more strategies, the merrier~~Where I'm coming from, and where you're going**

> I'm taking the phrase "revision strategies" from one of the classic studies of writing process, by Nancy Sommers. By comparing early and late drafts in two groups of writers, she found that beginning student writers tended to make changes at the level of word, phrase, and sentence, and that most of the word/phrase changes were substitutions: they didn't change the overall structure or meaning. Experienced adult writers made those changes, too, but also tended to go beyond—they made more changes at larger-than-paragraph levels, like theme or section, and they did a lot more cutting and reordering.
>
> **<u>The more strategies, the merrier</u>**
>
> Sommers' original article makes from some great reading, despite its kind of boring title […]

From Discovery to Planning

So far, my advice has mostly been retrospective: I'm asking you to look back at the revisions you've already made, and glean strategies from them. That's not a bad place to start, but the bigger goal is to improve your writing by expanding the ways you know how to improve your writing. This raises an important question: How will you know when to apply one kind of strategy over another—when to add more in the middle or the beginning, when to reorder or regroup?

Example 7. Reframing by adding at the start of a section

Strategy Search Suggestions

> **<u>So far, my advice has been mostly retrospective: I'm asking you to look back at the revision you've already made, and glean strategies from them. That's not a bad</u>**

> **<u>place to start, but the bigger goal isn't simply to label and catalog all these moves, but rather to use them moving forward, to improve your writing by expanding the ways you know how to improve writing. This raises an important question:</u>** How will you know when to apply one kind of strategy over another—when to add more in the middle, when to reorder or regroup? Unfortunately, there's no hard and fast rule: it'll usually depend on the particulars of your argument [...]

Unfortunately, there's no hard and fast set of rules: it'll ultimately depend on the particulars of your argument or narrative when you might want to restructure, or thicken, or reframe. Sometimes the best approach is to ask friendly readers where they had questions or had to reread more than once to understand. But since reordering is often both my most challenging and most rewarding revision move, here's what has helped me realize it might be time to try it:

- *Distant callbacks.* If you find yourself saying things like "As I said earlier," it's worth checking how much earlier it was. If readers will have to remember your point from before a whole intervening section, maybe it would make more sense to reposition the new part closer to the first part. On the other hand, maybe all you need is a regrouping: could you add new section titles to help readers anticipate the jump away from the first idea and back to it later? That might make it easier to follow your line of thought.
- *Bringing it down to size,* for example, with a "reverse sentence outline." A reverse outline is

> one you write after a draft exists, allowing you—like Sommers' experienced adult writers—to search that draft for the shape of an emerging argument, rather than assume the argument is already clear. By outlining in sentences, you essentially scale down the big picture into a paragraph or two: for many writers, a more familiar and manageable space in which to regroup, reorder, and recognize gaps to fill in (or extraneous chunks to cut). Once you've done it with the outline, the corresponding changes you can make in the piece as a whole should be easier to identify.

For regrouping, I think about *needing a break*. Beginnings and endings are positions of power; anything next to a pause gets extra emphasis. Conversely, long stretches without a beginning or ending—whether it's a four-line sentence or a full-page paragraph—seem to suggest there's nothing worth emphasizing. But that's usually not the case! So when I see a long paragraph or sentence, I look more closely for the highlights, and I try to place a period or paragraph break alongside them.

There are troves of authors with additional advice and suggested moves to look into; I've found Wendy Bishop's "Revising Out and Revising In" and E. Shelley Reid's *Solving Writing Problems* to be particularly helpful. Whatever move you choose, if you take a note as you're trying it, you'll be able to come back later and assess how successful it was for your draft. And seeing it in the context of your other named versions will help you consider whether it might work as well, or better, at another point in your process or on another level of scale.

A Parade of Small Rewards

Looking back and looking forward are all well and good, but above all it's the mid-process reflection that keeps me coming back to diffs. Recording what's changing helps us realize that there *is* actual progress happening, even when it might not look like it. As someone who has struggled with writer's block and anxiety for as long as I can remember, many of my first drafts don't look like much of anything, often for a long time. But a look through my diffs shows the progress that word counts alone would leave invisible: the hundreds of words written, then erased; the paragraphs of ideas in a particular order that turned out to be incompatible with another structure, and so had to be cut. In naming each revision, even when the revision move is subtraction, we get to pause and celebrate the writing that was there.

When do you usually celebrate your writing? When the essay is complete? When a grade comes back (depending on the grade)? When you don't have to think about it any more? By acknowledging the hard work and successes of mid-draft changes, version history reminds us that the journey itself is studded with small victories.

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Attributions

50.

STUDENT RESEARCH REFLECTIONS

Young Scholars in Writing is a peer-reviewed undergraduate journal that features research writing by outstanding authors. The editors work with undergraduate writers to develop, edit, and publish their research findings. The following three articles, in particular, feature undergraduate authors reflecting on their development as researchers, and serve as excellent examples of the kind of writing you may do in your composition classes:

Nidhi Gandhi's (2021) "My First Time Conducting a Study as a Novice Researcher"

Article Abstract: The field of Writing Studies borrows and adapts research methods from many disciplines, including quantitative and qualitative methods from the social sciences. However, many people still think of empirical research as something that is out of reach for undergraduate students in liberal arts majors. In this methodological reflection, the author describes her own journey from believing empirical research was for other people (especially those who like math) to conducting her own empirical research study related to faculty and students' perceptions of "Standard English." The author's reflection on the process of designing her study and collecting data not only provides an encouraging and honest "behind-the-scenes" look at the recursive nature of empirical research for other novice researchers in Writing Studies, but also reminds more experienced researchers, especially faculty, of the unique constraints undergraduate researchers face, especially when conducting studies that involve faculty as participants or rely on faculty to recruit participants.

Read the full article in *Young Scholars in Writing*

Emily Lawrence's (2022) "First Year Writing Student Attitudes and Beliefs: The Potential for Writing-Related Transfer"

Article Abstract: The concept of transfer is important in First-Year Writing (FYW). Further research is need ed on how students' existing beliefs about their FYW courses affect the likelihood of transferring their learning. My paper addresses this by gauging student beliefs both before and after taking a FYW course. I look at surveys and the three reflection assignments of eight FYW students. From the data, I argue student engagement is important to promote transfer and that reflection assignments may not be a good method of judging student learning. I conclude that FYW courses should focus more on ensuring students understand the purpose of reflection assignments.

Read the full article in *Young Scholars in Writing*

Isabelle Lundin's "Making Confident Changes: Using Metacognitive Revision as a Pedagogical Tool"

In the field of writing studies, many scholars agree that metacognitive reflection activities can impact the quality of students' text and have also been correlated with increased writing self-efficacy. To expand on this preexisting relationship between metacognition and writing self-efficacy, my study explored the impacts of metacognitive reflection, specifically during the revisions stage of the writing process. I used two qualitative research methods to observe the effects of this intervention: field observations of peer review sessions and thematic, deductive coding of participants' responses to an open-ended questionnaire. I found that the metacognitive revision questionnaire encouraged participants to consider revision choices that linked their purpose for writing to their identities and to the ways they appealed to their audience. Making linkages between purpose, identity, and audience through revision choices has implications for fostering writing self-efficacy.

Read the full article in *Young Scholars in Writing*

51.

REFLECTION EXERCISE: USING REFLECTION AND METACOGNITION TO DEVELOP YOUR HALF ESSAY

Lindsay Knisely

Abstract

Lindsay Knisely's exercise from the *Writing Spaces,* "Using Reflection and Metacognition to Develop Your Half Essay," encourages students to reflect on their work and be

aware of the recursive nature of the writing process.

This reading is available below and as a PDF.

I created an exercise for first-year writing students titled Using Reflection and Metacognition to Develop Your Half Essay because I wanted my students to use reflection recursively, as a tool to strengthen the analysis in their essays while they were still engaged in writing the essays themselves. This half-essay reflection exercise is a practical application of what Taczak and Robertson recommend in their chapter of Yancey's A Rhetoric of Reflection. In "Reiterative Reflection in the Twenty-First-Century Writing Classroom: An Integrated Approach to Teaching for Transfer," Taczak and Robertson write that "reflection encourages students to put what they are learning into practice while also serving as a way to set goals and move forward in their writing ability…more robust reflection begins with the invention or planning stages of writing and continues during the writing itself, in addition to involving a looking back after the writing is completed, or at each completed draft…" (43-44).

In order to create an opportunity to incorporate this intentional recursive reflection in the earlier stages of their writing, when it might be most helpful, the students were asked to pause after writing the first half of their papers and answer a series of questions to prompt them to reflect upon what they had written. In the activity, the students were asked to locate the most powerful moments of insight in the half essay and then add several sentences of deeper analysis to extend their thinking in those moments. Next, I prompted students to reflect upon what still needed work in their essays. The students then reflected on how effectively they were responding to the prompt, and what other sources they could incorporate. I reminded the students about the specific instruction in writing they had received—the recent in-class lessons, the resources they had reviewed—and asked them to reflect upon how they could directly apply what they had learned when writing the second half of their papers. Lastly, in order to emphasize the portability of this activity, I asked the students to reflect about how they could transfer the work they did in this exercise to future writing projects. This final element of the activity applies three of Anne Beaufort's "four moves teachers can initiate… [based on] what the current research in cognitive psychology suggests for facilitating transfer of learning." These three interconnected moves, as described by Beaufort in her chapter of A Rhetoric of Reflection, "Reflection: The Metacognitive Move towards Transfer of Learning," are:

1. Broadly frame the course content as knowledge to go, that is, make explicit references to broad applications for the course content in other arenas of life… 3. Introduce reflection about deep structures, broad concepts, and process strategies as tools not only for getting writing done for an immediate rhetorical situation but for transfer of learning to future writing tasks. 4. Invite application of learning to new tasks, drawing on mental models, deep-structure knowledge, and an inquiry process for learning. (26-27)

I've been using this exercise for the past several years in first- and second-year writing courses, and it has been gratifying to see how positively students respond to it in class and in their feedback on my course activities.

Time Commitment

25 minutes

Materials

Students need to bring at least half of their assigned essay, as well as some way to write on the paper itself or access the margins of their document online.

Activity Process

- First, students will locate the most powerful moments of insight in their half essays—the most incisive, original analysis that represents their unique contribution to the topic. It can be inspiring for students to think of this part of the exercise as mining their own generative ideas that drew them to the prompt in the first place. Next, they will extend their analysis in those places by writing 2-4 sentences of deeper analysis of those points, right on the essay itself. Ask students to address the implications of what they're saying in order to generate richer analysis.
- Next, students write about what still needs work in their half essay. They can discuss grammar, argument, quotations, analysis, introduction,

transitions, etc. They need to identify the major subject areas for them to focus on as they continue writing the paperas well as the writing skills they are working to improve. Ask students at this point to refer back to the instruction in writing they have received so far in the course, including the reference materials and texts on writing they have studied.

- Now, students are asked to revisit the sources they selected for the paper. What sources could they still incorporate in order to enrich their treatment of this topic? Are there a few more articles they'd like to reread and quote from in this paper? If they were inclined to add several more sources, what might they choose?
- At this point, students are asked to consider the unwritten part of this paper and plan out the ideas they're going to include to finish this essay. Students are asked to locate something they're looking forward to writing about in the full draft of the paper.
- Next, students are asked to plan when they will finish this paper and encouraged to manage their time so that they will not be completing the paper under stress.
- Finally, students are asked to share their responses in small groups and also spend some time in these groups discussing how they can transfer this self-reflective work to future writing projects. Students are reminded of the

demonstrated value ofsetting themselvesa deadline to write part of an essay, then following these steps to reflect upon how they can deepen their treatment of the topic and set themselves up to do their best work when finishing the paper.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity will:

- Use metacognition to gain awareness of their writing processes and habits
- Practice reflection recursively to develop their writing strategies as they are engaged in a composition project
- Expand their analytical writing abilities by using inquiry to generate analysis
- Recognize the portability of this activity for future writing contexts and take ownership of transferring these learning strategies to other coursework

Learning Accommodations

- Students may complete this activity after class if they need extra time.
- This activity can be presented in multiple formats to include in-person instruction and asynchronous, digital delivery.

Works Cited

Beaufort, Anne. "Reflection: The Metacognitive Move towards Transfer of Learning." *A Rhetoric of Reflection*, edited by Kathleen Blake Yancey, University Press of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 2016, pp. 23–41.

Taczak, Kara, and Liane Robertson. "Reiterative Reflection in the Twenty-First-Century Writing Classroom: An Integrated Approach to Teaching for Transfer." *A Rhetoric of Reflection*, edited by Kathleen Blake Yancey, University Press of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 2016, pp. 42–63.

Attributions

PART VII

APPENDIX: WRITING & RESEARCH SKILLS

This Appendix offers some additional assistance with the ethics and mechanics of integrating research, the importance of appropriate documentation styles for first-year writing courses, writing development at the sentence and paragraph level, and the nuances of cultivating writing and research skills for first-year writing.

For support on citations and different style systems, first consider Ethical Citation Practices, then decide if you'd like to cite your sources in MLA or APA. There are of course other options as well, though they're not addressed in this appendix.

Next, check out our recommendations about the differences between reading Popular Sources and Academic Sources. Once you have selected texts, are comfortable with citation and reading practices, consider whether to paraphrase, summarize, or quote these works. Remember to use signal phrases, and be thoughtful about synthesizing ideas within your body paragraphs. Hopefully these linked chapters will support your writing development. Please reach out to faculty with additional questions.

52.

ETHICAL CITATION PRACTICES

Kate L. Pantelides

It is certainly important to know *how* to cite sources effectively, and we have lots of style options to help us do that effectively, including APA, Chicago, MLA, Turabian, etc. However, it is equally important to think through who we cite and what story we tell with our citations. In this vein, the "Worknets" approach to researching secondary sources encourages writers to spend time with an individual source, taking note of keywords in the text, who the author is and who their professional network includes, what else was going on in the world when the text was published, and for the purposes of this conversation, what is one of the sources on which the text relies most heavily. Spending time understanding sources in these four ways helps us conceive of texts as artifacts reflective of their time, place, and connection to other people – both the person(s) who wrote the piece and the people who influenced the author(s). Such recognition might help us choose sources written by a different range of people than we might were we not paying attention to this larger story of what citation signals. For instance, if I'm writing a paper about weather patterns in Asia, it will be important to cite at least some sources by authors in Asia. Instead, if all of my sources are written by people in North America, which might be likely if I'm searching sources with which I'm most familiar, I might miss out on some important understandings of people in the place I'm better trying to understand. Similarly, If I'm writing an article about European football clubs, it will be important to cite European authors familiar with the sport and not rely solely on local (to me) sports experts – the terms and traditions vary across borders, sports, and roles associated with the sport.

Next time you conduct research, consider who you're citing in addition to what you're citing, and think about why/not you might seek a diverse set of perspectives on that topic. To learn more about why and how to cite a diverse group of authors, check out the following resources:

Itchuaqiyaq, Cana Uluak, and Jordan Frith. "Citational Practices as a Site of Resistance and Radical Pedagogy: Positioning the Multiply Marginalized and Underrepresented (MMU) Scholar Database as an Infrastructural Intervention." *Communication Design Quarterly,* 10, no. 3, 2022, pp. 10–19, cdq.sigdoc.org/wp-content/uploads/

2022/10/CDQ_Special-Issue-10-3updated-accessibility.pdf.

Jones, Natasha N. "Citation Practices: Shifting Paradigms." *Open Words: Access and English Studies,* 13, no. 1, 2021, pp. 142–52, wac.colostate.edu/docs/openwords/v13n1/jones.pdf

Sano-Franchini, Jennifer, Sheila Carter-Tod, Leigh Gruwell, Rachel Ihara, Alexandra Hidalgo, and Lori Ostergaard. "Position Statement on Citation Justice in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies." *CCCC,* November 2022. https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/citation-justice.

53.

FORMATTING YOUR PAPER IN MLA

Melanie Gagich and Kate L. Pantelides

The Modern Language Association began in 1883 as a "discussion and advocacy group for the study of literature and modern languages" ("Modern Language Association"). MLA style was created by this group in 1951 in order to provide scholars in this field with a set of shared writing and citation guidelines. MLA style is mostly used in the humanities, such as English and modern languages; it governs how writers format academic papers and cite the sources that they use.

For the most current version of MLA style, please visit the MLA website or the Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL) MLA Guide, which you can see embedded below.

You can also consult the library's Citation Style Guide and the full text of the MLA Handbook, 9th edition, which is available online to MTSU students through the library.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=169

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54.

FORMATTING YOUR PAPER IN APA

Melanie Gagich

American Psychological Association (APA)

The American Psychological Association, established in 1892, is "the largest scientific and professional organization of psychologists in the United States" with approximately 117,000 members ("American Psychological Association"). The American Psychological Association created their style guide in 1929 and is most often used in the social sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology, education, criminology), business, nursing, linguistics, and composition. While the style, organization, and formatting of APA differ from MLA, similarities between the two styles remain. For example, to help readers understand the critical conversation to which your writing contributes and to avoid plagiarism, provide readers with important source-related information, and give credit where credit is due. You must include bibliographic information at the end of the document (the Reference page) and in-text citations in the form of signal phrases and/or parenthetical citations.

For the most recent version of APA style please visit their website or the OWL of Purdue's APA Guide.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mtsu.pressbooks.pub/engl1020/?p=182

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55.

READING POPULAR SOURCES

Robin Jeffrey and Amanda Lloyd

What is a Popular Source?

When we say that a source is "popular," it does not necessarily mean "well-liked."

Popular sources are articles that are written for a general audience. These sources are published so that members of the general public can access, read, and understand the content. There is little jargon or highly specific or technical vocabulary.

Sometimes popular sources are freely available to the public, and sometimes the content is available only with a paid subscription.

Popular sources include newspaper articles, magazine articles, websites, webpages, letters to the editor, blog posts and more.

Reading Newspaper Articles, Magazine Articles, and Website Articles

"Fake news!" "Media bias!"

We hear charges like these often, mostly in reference to the types of popular sources that we can find on the internet, on TV, on the radio, or in print. We should not be tempted to write off all popular sources as somehow "bad." We should, however, be willing to evaluate any popular source's authority and credibility before choosing to accept its validity or choosing to include it in an academic assignment.

How can we evaluate newspaper, magazine, and website sources? Use rhetorical reading skills to understand both the text and its context before you incorporate it into any assignment.

Understand the Context

A main part of grasping the context is knowing information about the publisher and author. Consider the following questions as prompts that will help you to better understand these elements:

Publisher. Who published this article? Remember that a publisher is not always the same as the author of a particular text. Does the publishing source cater to a particular audience? Does the publisher have some sort of ideological identity or bias? A bit of research on who published the article you are looking at (which newspaper, magazine, website, or organization) can give you some insight into any purpose or agenda that may shape the content of the article.

Author. Is the author an expert on the topic? A journalist? Someone who has direct experience with the topic or someone who is offering second-hand commentary or analysis?

Assess the Quality of the Text

Identify the author's main claim. Use the following questions to help you pay attention to how the author supports their claim:

- Do you see relevant, evidence-based support or just emotional examples?
- Do you see statistics used consistently and fairly, with an explanation of where they came from?
- Does the author consider opposing viewpoints, and if so, how thoroughly?
- Do you see logical fallacies in the author's argument?

Assess the Quality of the Explanation, if the article is explanatory

Identify the author's thesis. Use the following questions to help you determine how balanced the author's explanation is:

- Do they present the argument fairly and ethically?
- Does the author effectively summarize the sources used? (Please note that magazine and newspaper writing style does not require the types of in-text citations that we use in our papers).

Currency

Depending on the information you are using, the currency of the site could be vital. Check for the date of publication or the date of the latest update. Most of the links on a website should also still work; if they no longer do, that may be a sign the site is too out of date to be useful.

Relevance

Perhaps the article is interesting or easy to read. But is there something about the text itself or its context that makes it useful for your assignment?

Attributions

56.

READING ACADEMIC SOURCES

Melanie Gagich & Emilie Zickel

Academic sources (also called scholarly sources) are different from the popular sources that many of us read each day. We are constantly exposed to "popular" media – news websites, TV channels, magazines and newspapers. It is often in college that we first get exposure and access to scholarly articles and books.

An Academic Source (Scholarly Source) is material that is

- **authoritative**, meaning the article has been produced by an expert in their field (often this means that a person has a Ph.D. in their field and/or works as a researcher or professor at colleges or universities), and therefore has the authority that expertise affords;

- **peer-reviewed**, meaning the article has been rigorously read and reviewed by other experts or authorities in that same field and is published only after that rigorous review;
- and **published in a Scholarly Research Journal**, meaning these articles are published for an audience who is also highly involved in that academic discipline (often other people who have Ph.D.s in the same field or are pursuing studies within it).

Academic articles are often published in special journals that focus on one academic discipline or one topic of study. While in recent years some freely accessible open-source peer reviewed journals have begun publishing, most scholarly research journals require a paid subscription. As a college student, you have access to many academic articles because your university pays for access to academic research databases that give students and faculty members access to these scholarly research journals.

Academic articles tend to be more challenging to read than popular sources. They often contain academic jargon, highly specialized vocabulary that is used within a particular academic field. They tend to be longer than a typical popular source article in a newspaper or magazine. They may contain many in-text citations, diagrams, tables, or other visual representations of data. While academic articles can be intimidating to read, there are strategies that you can use to effectively engage these challenging texts, as Karen Rosenberg discusses in her essay, "Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources."

Considerations for Evaluating Academic Sources

There are ways in which academic articles can be critiqued and evaluated just like popular articles. While academic sources are often deemed credible because they come out of a rigorous process of peer review-before-publication and are written both by and for the academic community, we should still take time to examine and evaluate such sources before we use them. Yes, even scholarly sources contain embedded biases.

To evaluate an academic source you will consider the author, length of article, date of publication, and relevance. The following are questions and prompts that will help you evaluate each of these elements.

Author

How prolific is the author in his or her field? Has he or she written extensively on the topic that is addressed in this paper? Often you can check the Works Cited to see if the author has any previous publications on the topic addressed in the current paper. If so, that could be an indication of the author's long-term commitment to this research topic or question.

Length of the Article

Sometimes articles will be labeled in academic databases as “scholarly articles” even though they are only a couple of pages long. If your article seems rather short and does not follow the general structure of an academic article (Abstract, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, List of Works Cited), then you should spend time considering whether or not the article is a relevant or credible source for the purposes of your assignment? Is there a more thorough or detailed source that you could use?

Date of Publication

How current is the article? If you are looking for a historical perspective on your topic, then an older article may be useful. But if you need current information and your article is 10 or 15 years old, is it as relevant and useful for your assignment?

Relevance

Perhaps you have a wonderful academic article that is authoritative, credible, interesting, full of credible and compelling research. But if the article is not answering your research question or the assignment question in any meaningful way, perhaps the source is not relevant to you. Just because a source is “good” does not mean that it is good for your particular assignment.

Attributions

57.

PARAPHRASING AND SUMMARIZING

Robin Jeffrey and Kate L. Pantelides

While quoting may be the first thing that many people think of when they think about integrating sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, and citing data are also ways to incorporate information from outside materials into your essays or projects. Although you use your own words in a paraphrase or summary, you must still cite your source(s).

Paraphrasing

Paraphrases allow you to describe specific information from a source (ideas from a paragraph or several consecutive paragraphs) *in your own words*. They are like translations of an author's original idea. Paraphrases often include attributive tags or signal phrases to let your readers know where the paraphrased material begins. With this move, you retain the detail of the original thought, but you express it in your own way. The following are some facts that will help you better make this rhetorical move:

- Paraphrases of the text should be expressed in your own words, with your own sentence structure, in your own way. You should not simply "word swap," that is, replace a few words from the original with synonyms.
- If you must use a few of the author's words within your paraphrase, they must have quotation marks around them.
- Paraphrases should be followed by parenthetical citations.
- As with a quote, you need to explain to your reader why the paraphrased material is significant to the point you are making in your paper.

Summarizing

Summaries allow you to describe general ideas from a source. Summaries are shorter than the original text, and you do not express detailed information as you would with a paraphrase. The following are some tips to apply when summarizing:

- Any summaries of the text should not include direct wording from the original source. All text should be in your words, though the ideas are those of the original author.

- A signal phrase should let your readers know where the summarized material begins.
- If you are offering a general summary of an entire article, there is no need to cite a specific page number.

Attributions

58.

QUOTING

Melanie Gagich

What are Direct Quotes?

Direct quotes are portions of a text taken word for word and placed inside of a work. Readers know when an author is using a direct quote because it is denoted by the use of quotation marks and an in-text citation.

Example:

In his foundational work, David Bartholomae argues that "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university…"(4).

Direct quotes might also be formatted as a "block quote," which occurs if the borrowed language is longer than four (4) lines of text. In MLA, A block quote requires the author to indent the borrowed language, place the citation at the end of the block, and remove quotation marks.

Example:

In his foundational work, David Bartholomae argues that

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion-invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (4)

Be sure to be careful when quoting directly because failing to write the text exactly as it appears in the original text is not an ethical use of direct quotes. Also, failing to bracket the quote with quotation marks and/or citing it inside the text is also unethical and both mistakes are a form of plagiarism.

When Should I Use Direct Quotes?

Generally, direct quotes should be used sparingly because you want to rely on your own understanding of the material and avoid over-relying on another's words. Over quoting does not reinforce your credibility as an author; however, you should use direct quotes when "the author you are quoting has coined a term unique to her or his research and relevant within your own paper"(The Owl of Purdue).

The Basics of Directly Quoting

The following are tips to apply when directly quoting material:

- All quoted material should be enclosed in quotations marks to set it off from the rest of the text. The exception to this is block quotes, which require different formatting.
- Quoted material should be an accurate word-for-word reproduction from the author's original text. You cannot alter any wording or any spelling. If you must do so, you must use a bracket or an ellipsis (see number 2 in the section below).
- A clear signal phrase/attribution tag should precede each quotation.
- A parenthetical citation should follow each quotation.

The Hard Part of Directly Quoting: Integrating Quotes into Your Writing

You, as the author of your essay, should explain the significance of each quotation to your reader. This goes far beyond simply including a signal phrase. Explaining the significance means indicating how the quoted material supports the point you are making in that paragraph. Remember: just because you add a quote does not mean that you have made your point. Quotes never speak for themselves. How and why does that quoted material make the point you think it does? Here are some helpful phrases for explaining quoted materials. "X" is the author's last name:

- (quoted material). What X's point demonstrates is that . . .
- (quoted material). Here, X is not simply stating ______, she is also demonstrating _________.
- (quoted material). This is an example of _____ because ______.
- (quoted material). This statement clearly shows _____ because ______.

Sometimes, in order to smoothly integrate quoted material into your paper, you may need to remove a word or add a word to make the quote make sense. If you make any change to quoted material, it must be formatted correctly using an ellipsis or brackets:

- Use brackets [these are brackets] to change a word. "Inserting or Altering Words in a Direct

Quotation" explains what brackets are and how to use them.

- Use an ellipsis (this is an ellipsis…) to indicate omissions. "Omitting Words from a Direct Quotation" explains what brackets are and how to use them.

When in doubt, strive to allow your voice—not a quote from a source—to begin each paragraph, precede each quote, follow each quote, and end each paragraph. Quotes that are integrated well into a paper allow you to control the paper. That is what a reader wants to see: your ideas and the way that you engage sources to shape and discuss your ideas.

Attributions

59.

SIGNAL PHRASES

John Lanning and Amanda Lloyd

A **signal phrase**, also known as an attributive tag, is a device used to smoothly integrate quotations and paraphrases into your essay. It is important to use signal phrases to clearly attribute supporting evidence to an author and to avoid interrupting the flow of an essay. Signal phrases can also be used as meaningful transitions, moving your readers between your ideas and those of your sources.

A basic signal phrase consists of an author's name and an active verb indicating how the author is presenting the material. A signal phrase may also include information explaining an author's credentials and/or affiliations as well as the title and/or publisher of the source **text**.

Referring to the Author within a Signal Phrase

In many instances, a signal phrase should contain only the last name of the author or authors of the source text (as opposed to the author's first *and* last name). For instance, APA style guidelines require no reference to an author's first name at any point in an essay and few if any gender-specific pronouns. But in MLA papers, if you are referring to an author for the first time in your essay, you should include that author's first name (you might also want to include the author's credentials and the title of the source—see "Types of Signal Phrases" below). Any future signal phrase should refer to the author by last name only or with a pronoun when it's perfectly clear to whom that pronoun refers. Consider the following examples:

- Michael Pollan observes that "Americans today are having a national conversation about food and agriculture that would have been impossible to imagine even a few short years ago" (29).
- Pollan continues, "But the national conversation unfolding around the subject of food and farming really began in the 1970s" (29).
- He then specifies, "I would argue that the conversation got under way in earnest in 1971, when [Wendell] Berry published an article in The

Last Whole Earth Catalogue" (29).

Notice how each signal phrase verb is followed by a comma (or the word "that"), which is then followed by one space before the opening quotation mark.

In essays written according to MLA and APA guidelines, it is acceptable to refer to the author as "the author" as long as it is perfectly clear to whom you are referring. In APA, it is common to see general references to "researchers."

Signal Phrase Verb Tense

In the examples above, notice how the signal phrase verbs are written in present tense. When you are asked to write a paper that follows MLA guidelines, signal phrases should always be written in present (not past) tense. When writing a paper using APA style, signal phrase verbs should be written in past tense. Consider the following example:

- Pollan (2009) observed that "Americans today are having a national conversation about food and agriculture that would have been impossible to imagine even a few short years ago" (p. 29).

Notice how APA in-text citations also differ from MLA style in that APA citations include the year of publication and the page number is preceded by a "p."

Varying Your Verbs

You should also vary your signal phrase verbs (rather than simply using "states" throughout your entire essay) in order to maintain your readers' interest and to indicate the author's intended use of the excerpted material. See below for examples of strong signal phrase verbs.

Types of Signal Phrases

In most instances, the first time the author is mentioned in an MLA-style essay, as well as including the author's first *and* last name in a signal phrase, it is also a good idea to include the author's credentials and the title of the source.

While providing the author's credentials and title of the source are the most common types of signal phrases, there are others we should be aware of. In the examples below, the information relevant to the type of signal phrase is underlined.

Type: Author's credentials are indicated.

Example: Grace Chapmen, Curator of Human Health & Evolutionary Medicine at the Springfield Natural History Museum, explains…

Purpose: Presenting an author's credentials should help build credibility for the passage you are about to present. Including the author's credentials gives your readers a reason to consider your sources.

Type: Author's *lack of* credentials is indicated.

Example: Matthew Spencer, whose background is in marriage counseling, not foreign policy, claims…

Purpose: Identifying an author's lack of credentials in a given area can help illustrate a lack of authority on the subject matter and persuade the audience not to adopt the author's ideas. Pointing to an author's lack of credentials can be beneficial when developing your response to counter-arguments.

Type: Author's social or political stance, if necessary to the content, is explained.

Example: Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Roland Hayes, prominent civil rights activist, preaches…

Ralph Spencer, who has ties to the White Nationalist movement, denies…

Purpose: Explaining the author's social or political stance can help a reader to understand why that author expresses a particular view. This understanding can positively or negatively influence an audience. Be careful to avoid engaging in logical fallacies such as loaded language.

Type: Publisher of the source is identified.

Example: According to a recent *Gallup* poll…

Purpose: Identifying the publisher of the passage can help reinforce the credibility of the information presented and you can capitalize on the reputation/ credibility of the publisher of the source material.

Type: Title of the Source is included.

Example: In "Understanding Human Behavior," Riley argues …

Purpose: Informs the reader where the cited passage is being pulled from.

Type: Information that establishes context is presented.

Example: In a speech presented during a Free Speech rally, Elaine Wallace encourages …

Purpose: Presenting the context that the original information was presented can help the audience understand the author's purpose more clearly.

MLA Signal Phrase Verbs

Acknowledges	Counters	Notes
Admits	Declares	Observes
Agrees	Denies	Points out
Argues	Disputes	Reasons
Asserts	Emphasizes	Refutes
Believes	Finds	Rejects
Claims	Illustrates	Reports
Compares	Implies	Responds
Confirms	Insists	Suggests
Comments	Maintains	Thinks
Contends	Mentions	Writes

APA Signal Phrase Verbs

Acknowledged	Countered	Noted
Admitted	Declared	Observed
Agreed	Denied	Pointed out
Argued	Disputed	Reasoned
Asserted	Emphasized	Refuted
Believed	Found	Rejected
Claimed	Illustrated	Reported
Compared	Implied	Responded
Confirmed	Insisted	Suggested
Commented	Maintained	Thought
Contended	Mentioned	Wrote

Attributions

60.

HOW TO SYNTHESIZE

Svetlana Zhuravlova

How do you synthesize?

Synthesis is a common skill we practice all the time when we converse with others on topics that we have different levels of knowledge and feeling about. When you argue with your friends or classmates about a controversial topic, like abortion or affirmative action or gun control, your overall understanding of the topic grows as you incorporate their ideas, experiences, and points of view into a broader appreciation of the complexities involved. In professional and academic writing, synthesizing requires you to seek out this kind of multi-leveled understanding through reading, research, and discussion. Though, in academic writing, this is another kind of discussion: you set the goal for the discussion, organize your research findings, orchestrate the progress of the discussion, provide comments, build logical guidance for your audience (readers of your Synthesis Essay), and finally you draw your conclusion on the topic.

Synthesis Steps

Step 1: Determine the goal(s) for your discussion, such as reviewing a topic or supporting an argument:

For example: *How to motivate people to make healthier food choices?*

Step 2: Organize the discussion among the authors of your found researched materials:

All authors agree that junk food is damaging to people's health. For example, Authors Doctor X and Doctor Z and Nurse-dietitian Y publish results of their researches to show that eating junk food causes obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other illnesses that drastically shorten lifespan.

Step 3: Continue to lead the discussion among the authors of your sources:

Alerted by the appalling data about the damages inflicted by junk food consumption, researchers from the University of … conducted a survey. The majority of the respondents (XX%) admit that they are aware of the risks of relying on unhealthy food. However, XX% respond that this food is cheaper and so affordable. XX% also argue that this kind of food is convenient: easy to cook ("just heat and eat"), while XX% say their school-age children give preference to this *kind of food compared to home-made choices. In response, Doctor X suggests…*

Step 4: Provide comments and build logical guidance for your audience:

Analysis of processed food ingredients and its production technologies provided by Doctor Nutritionist N in his article "… … … "will make the survey respondents challenge and reconsider their priorities in food choices…"

Step 5: Summarize the most vivid of the authors' examples and explanations (like here: link the illustrations to the above survey data you mentioned earlier):

To continue in the discussion: *Pediatrician M and Children Psychologist K, in their article "… … … …" explain to parents their children's preferences in food choices … In addition to this, Source N gives examples of activities organized by … in …* (now, you summarize some of those examples and comment on them).

Step 6: Finally, draw your unique conclusion on the topic: in fact, the answer to your research question:

Overall, education as well as behavior promoting activities in a family, at school, at work-place, and in a community will not only teach people to make healthier, daily food choices, but also give them a clearer vision of the long term outcomes and benefits of such choices – benefits that will both improve their health and lower their monetary expenses.

Attributions

61. TROUBLESHOOTING: BODY PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

John Lanning and Sarah M. Lacy

Developing a paragraph can be a difficult, particularly for those of us who have learned some inflexible rules about writing. For instance, many of us have been told that a paragraph is 5-6 sentences long, and that each paragraph should have one clear focus. This isn't necessarily a bad place to start. But sometimes paragraphs must be longer or shorter, and sometimes they address multiple pieces of evidence or ideas. If you are struggling with the reality of your writing subject potentially conflicting with the rules you've learned, you might find the following step-by-step approach helpful.

Perhaps the easiest way to think about a "fully developed" paragraph is to think of writing each paragraph in 6 different steps rather than a certain amount of sentences. These steps can be helpful in not only understanding the criteria needed in a paragraph or how they connect to one another to create a conversation in your paper but also to ensure that your audience understands your purpose in presenting this paragraph.

Focusing on the number of sentences may limit how you express the idea being discussed. However, this doesn't mean that the information can be presented without a plan in mind; you should begin with understanding what a paragraph needs to "be" and "do."

Goals of the Paragraph: What it should "be"

While there is no "right way" to develop a paragraph, the following is a list of certain criteria that **an academic** paragraph should work to be:

- **Unified:** Every sentence presented works to explain the main idea for the paragraph.
- **Coherent**: You present the information in a logical order that allows the audience to understand your purpose.
- **Developed:** To achieve this, you must provide enough information so that the audience has a clear understanding of the main idea expressed in the topic sentence.

Developing the Paragraph: Creating what it should "do"

The following is a list of things that your paragraph should do:

Step #1: Establish the Main Idea (Topic)

- It is important to begin a paragraph with a clear, concise, and limited topic sentence. Many problems with unity and coherency begin with a faulty or vague topic sentence. Being able to recognize the parts of a topic sentence will help you maintain a unified paragraph. If we break a basic topic sentence down, there are two distinct parts:

The topic being discussed + Your approach to the topic

Step #2: Provide an Explanation

- This step may be a bit of a trap. Some people are tempted to reach for their research and begin providing support for the **main idea**. However, this isn't always the best option. Many times when students do this, they are using their research/ support to do the thinking for them. Before reaching for the research, students should **provide an explanation** regarding their topic sentence.

- You can also think of this section as a link between the topic sentence and supporting evidence where you provide any necessary contextual information for the evidence.
- The main focus of any paragraph should be what you have to say. If you are putting forth this idea in support of your thesis, the audience is going to want to know what you think about it–what is important or significant about this main idea. They may not fully understand the topic sentence the way you intend them to, so explain your reasoning to the reader.

Step #3: Provide Support/ Evidence

- Now that your audience should have a better understanding of the main idea/ topic, you are ready to **provide support/ evidence**. You want to be very selective when deciding what textual support to include in the paragraph. Not all evidence is the same, and not all evidence achieves the same goals (thinking ethos/ logos/ pathos here). The textual support should help to reinforce or illustrate more about your topic sentence for the reader, helping them understand it in a more complete way.
- Whether your support takes the form of a direct quote or a paraphrase, it must be properly embedded and documented.

Step #4: Interpret the Support/ Evidence

- This is often one of the more difficult aspects of writing. No matter how clear you think the textual support provided is, it does not speak for itself. The reason is that the audience may not understand how you intend them to interpret the information and how that relates back to supporting the main idea of the paragraph. When you **explain how this information is relevant to your topic sentence**, why it is important or significant, you need to offer insight to that information.
- Don't simply follow up your support with a single sentence that begins with a phrase like "This proves" or "Meaning" and then restate what the evidence said. Know why you included this information and why it is important to your paragraph. You need to connect the dots for your reader, so they see exactly how that information is providing support, and helping your main idea.
- The bulk of the information should be coming from you, not your sources. Your audience wants to what it is that you think, your perspective on the idea, and how you intended to link it back to the thesis.

Step #5: Repeat Steps 3 and 4, if necessary

- If you have more than one piece of textual support that you want to include, you need to repeat the two previous steps to fully develop your paragraph. You will want to vary your evidence. If you use statistics, then you may want to include expert testimony. If the first piece of evidence focuses on logic, you want to tap into one of the other appeals such as pathos to bring a full view of the issue to your reader. However, you don't want to keep simply repeating this sequence: evidence should be used to help achieve your purpose, not to fill space.

Step #6: Connect to the thesis statement or orienting principle

- When you feel that your audience has a clear understanding of your idea and its significance to your thesis, you can wrap up the paragraph in different ways:
    - emphasize the importance of understanding the idea.
    - make a connection to previous and/or forthcoming ideas.
    - overall ensure that the information is being related directly back to the main purpose of the essay as defined in your thesis statement or orienting principle.

While this is not the only way to write a paragraph, it can be a helpful guide and/or model when you need a structure to begin shaping and organizing your ideas, to help you compose a unified, coherent, well-developed paragraph.

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GLOSSARY

abstract

a brief summary of an article, often including the author's research question, methodologies, and results

academic

of, relating to, or associated with an academy or school especially of higher learning

Ad Hominem

an "argument" relating to or aimed at a person rather than (directly) addressing the position in dispute; spec. (a) that impugns the character or motives of the proponent of a position rather than addressing the position proposed; (b) that criticizes a position or argument on the grounds of its (alleged) inconsistency with other things its proponent presupposes or asserts or does

affinity phase

the phase of research where you will consider how writers are connected to each other

analog

of, relating to, or being a mechanism or device in which information is represented by continuously variable physical quantities; not digital : not computerized

annotated bibliography

an alphabetized list of sources that includes a summary for each text intended for a research project, as well as some assessment of the sources' relevance to a specific project; the list of sources is usually cited according to a conventional format, such as MLA or APA

annotation

the action of making notes while reading, listening, or viewing; the action of adding notes to a works cited or reference page, usually in the form of summary, analysis, and topic connection paragraphs or statements

antithesis

Figure of balance in which two contrasting ideas are intentionally juxtaposed, usually through parallel structure; a contrasting of opposing ideas in adjacent phrases, clauses, or sentences

APA

the American Psychological Association or the documentation style associated with the American Psychological Association that is commonly used in the social sciences such as psychology, education, and linguistics

argument

the thoughtful development of logically sound, carefully constructed assertions that are formed after the diligent consideration of numerous positions

argumentation

the action or process of reasoning systematically in support of an idea, action, or theory

arrangement

the action of arranging or disposing in order; often referred to as the organization state of the writing process, though arrangement takes place across the writing process and can be both an aesthetic and an argumentative consideration

audience

a component of the rhetorical situation; any person or group who is the intended recipient of a message conveyed through text, speech, audio; the person/ people the author is trying to influence

aural

of or pertaining to the organ of hearing; received or perceived by the ear

author

the creator of a text or speech; the person or organization who is communicating in order to try to effect a change in his or her audience

basic writers

is a pedagogical term for "high-risk" students who are perceived to be unprepared for freshman composition.

Mina Shaughnessy (1977) argues that basic writers produce compositions in which there are a "small numbers of words with large numbers of errors." David Bartholomae (2005) maintains that "the distinguishing mark of the basic writer is that he works outside the conceptual structures that his more literate counterparts work within."

beneficence

Beneficence asks
whether the research is charitable,
equitable, and fair to
participants by taking
into full account the

possible consequences for the researcher and the participants.

bias

a tendency, inclination, or leaning towards a particular characteristic, behavior, etc.; that which sways or influences a person in their actions, perceptions, etc.; a controlling or directing influence; tendency to favor or dislike a person or thing, especially as a result of a preconceived opinion; partiality, prejudice

bibliographic phase

the phase in research where you will trace intersections between sources

brainstorming

the state at which a writer/author engages in generating ideas, exploring those ideas, and developing what will become the topic, thesis, and, ultimately, essay

Canons of Rhetoric

Invention - the finding out or selection of topics to be treated, or arguments to be used; often referred to as the brainstorming or prewriting stage of the writing process, though invention takes place across the writing process

Arrangement - the action of arranging or disposing in order; often referred to as the organization state of the writing process, though arrangement takes place across the writing process and can be both an aesthetic and an argumentative consideration

Style - the associated genre conventions with which an author chooses to compose; these conventions include tone, level of formality, choice of register, punctuation, and grammar and syntactical concerns

Memory - The perpetuated knowledge or recollection (of something); that which is remembered of a person, object, or event; (good or bad) posthumous reputation; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past; the faculty by which things are remembered considered as residing in the awareness or consciousness of a particular individual or group

Delivery - how the compositions we develop reach the audience; in classical Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, it was primarily concerned with speakers who in real-time stood before reasonably attentive audiences to speak persuasively about matters of civic concern; in modern tradition it is associated with genre, medium, circulation, and ecologies

case-study

a process or record of research in which detailed consideration is given to the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time; a particular instance of something used or analyzed in order to illustrate a thesis or principle

choric phase

the phase of research where you will consider the broader rhetorical
context in which an article is written

chronological

order of events over time

Chronos

the Greek word for time in the linear sense (which is different from kairos)

circulation

dissemination or publication, whether by transmission from one to another, or by distribution or diffusion of separate copies; the extent to which copies of a newspaper, periodical, etc., are distributed, the number of readers which it reaches

claim

the argument that is supported by evidence; another term for the thesis; a statement that declares or supports purpose

close reading

is reading to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; often means re-reading a text several times

code-mesh

melding multiple linguistic codes, including multiple registers, dialects, or languages; in the university classroom this often references students including words and phrases from home languages or dialects that might differ from traditional expectations of formal, academic discourse

collaboration

a working practice whereby individuals work together for a common purpose

communities of practice

a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals

composing

to make by putting together parts or elements: to make up, form, frame, fashion, construct, produce; to make or produce in literary form, to write as author

composition

a work of music, literature, or art

Composition Studies

the professional field and academic discipline that revolves around writing, research into writing, and instruction of writing

conceptual metaphor

a metaphor (or figurative comparison) in which one idea (or conceptual domain) is understood in terms of another

consent forms

a document signed by persons of interest to confirm that they agree with an activity that will happen

constellate

form or cause to form into a cluster or group; gather together

constructivist

an understanding of research that considers the interactions between researchers, research subjects, and their environments

content analysis

a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text); quantification and analyzation of the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts in one collection of material

context

(also known as rhetorical situation) the context or set of circumstances out of which a text arises (author/ speaker, audience, purpose, setting, text/speech)

conventions

the elements, themes, topics, tropes, characters, situations, and plot lines common in specific genres--types of writing

Creative Commons

Creative Commons licenses give everyone from individual creators to large institutions a standardized way to grant the public permission to use their creative work under copyright law.

credibility

(related to ethos) the author's or text's state of being reliable and trustworthy

Critical Conversation

the scholarly conversation to which a research project contributes

critical reading

the close, careful reading/listening/viewing of a composition that is undertaken in order to understand it fully and assess its merits, while taking into account the composition’s context or rhetorical situation

Cultural Rhetorics

is an area of study within Writing Studies that views writing as a cultural practice, always embedded within the practices and values of those who compose; draws our attention to the relationships between people, practices, and text, relationships that function like a constellation in its many connections and networks

currency

the state of being relative to current concerns

data

information considered collectively; evidence used for research

database

a structured set of data held in computer storage and typically accessed or manipulated by means of specialized software; or an archive of specific information stored by topic

debate

a discussion in which reasons are advanced for and against some proposition or proposal

deductive

of, relating to, or provable by deriving conclusions by reasoning ; employing deduction in reasoning

deliberative rhetoric

speech or writing that attempts to persuade an audience to take—or not take—some action

delivery

how the compositions we develop reach the audience; in classical Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, it was primarily concerned with speakers who in real-time stood before reasonably attentive audiences to speak persuasively about matters of civic concern; in modern tradition it is associated with genre, medium, circulation, and ecologies

depth

the amount of knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, insight, feeling, etc., present in a person's mind or evident either in some product of the mind, as a learned paper, argument, work of art, etc.

deviation

the action of departing from an established course or accepted standard

digital

of, relating to, or utilizing devices constructed or working by the methods or principles of electronics; characterized by electronic and especially computerized technology; composed of data in the form of especially binary digits

directive verb

is a verb that indicates an official or authoritative instruction

discourse

communication of thought in conversation; a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing, as a dissertation, treatise, sermon, etc.

discourse analysis

a research method for studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context; aims to understand how language is used in real life situations; includes investigating purposes and effects of different types of language

disposition

prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination; the tendency of something to act in a certain manner under given circumstances

embodiment

draws attention to the knowledge we glean from our body – not just the mind; often minimized in Western rhetorical traditions; that in which (a principle, an abstract idea, etc.) is embodied, actualized, or concretely expressed

empirical research

knowledge or data that is gained by observation or experience

ethical research

considerations of research design that weigh the potential outcome of the findings alongside the process of ascertaining those findings; ethical research includes (1) Respect for Persons (autonomy), which acknowledges the dignity and freedom of every person; (2) Beneficence, which requires that researchers maximize benefits and minimize harms or risks associated with research; and (3) Justice, which requires the equitable selection and recruitment and fair treatment of research subjects

ethical treatment

treatment in accordance with the rules or standards for right conduct or practice, especially the standards of a profession

ethos

refers to the reputation or believability of a speaker/rhetor; ethical appeals tap into the values or ideologies that the audience holds (audience values) or appeals that lean on the reputation or believability of the speaker/author (authorial credibility)

evidence

data, or what writers use to support or defend their argument, the validity of which depends on the academic discipline or academic audience

exigence

the event or occurrence that prompts rhetorical discourse; the event begins the “cycle” of rhetorical discourse about a particular issue

figurative language

the use of words in a way that deviates from the conventional order and meaning in order to convey a complicated meaning, colorful writing, clarity, or evocative comparison

First Year Composition

(also known as first-year writing, freshman composition, or freshman English) is usually two introductory core curriculum writing courses that are required of students in U.S. colleges and universities; these courses generally focus on improving students' abilities to compose, as well as develop a rhetorical understanding of writing

format

the shape, size, and general makeup (as of something printed); general plan of organization, arrangement, or choice of material (as for a composition)

genre

often thought of as a type or category of writing, e.g. business memos, organization charts, menus, book reviews; a discursive response to a recurrent, social action; materials that mediate social interaction

genre analysis

an analysis of the conventions and deviations for a specific genre

genre conventions

the norms and expectations (or similarities) of a genre

genre deviations

the differences between particular instances within a genre

gestural

of or pertaining to gesture; consisting of gestures

growth mindset

a state of mind that happens "when students understand that their abilities can be developed" (Dweck, 2014).

guidelines

an indication or outline of policy or conduct

Humanities

literary learning or scholarship; the branch of learning concerned with human culture; the academic subjects collectively comprising this branch of learning include history, literature, ancient and modern languages, law, philosophy, art, and music

hypothesis

a proposition or principle put forth or stated as a basis for reasoning or argument, or as a premise from which to draw a conclusion; a supposition or educated guess based on available evidence

in-text citation

a reference made within the body of an academic essay that alerts the reader to a source that has informed the writing and ensures that credit is given to original authors or theorists

inductive

of, relating to, or employing mathematical or logical induction

informed consent

Valid informed consent for research must include three major elements: (1) disclosure of information, (2) competency of the patient (or surrogate) to make a decision, and (3) voluntary nature of the decision.

Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

a group that has been formally designated to review and monitor biomedical research involving human subjects. In accordance with FDA regulations, an IRB has the authority to approve, require modifications in (to secure approval), or disapprove research. This group review serves an important role in the protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects. (Food and Drug Administration)

intention

a determination to act in a certain way; the product of attention directed to an object of knowledge

intertextuality

the relationship between texts, especially literary ones; a concept that describes how
other people's language is seamlessly embedded in our own

interview protocol

an instrument of inquiry—asking questions for specific information related to the aims of a study (Patton, 2015) as well as an instrument for conversation about a particular topic (i.e., someone's life or certain ideas and experiences)

Invention

the finding out or selection of topics to be treated, or arguments to be used; often referred to as the brainstorming or prewriting stage of the writing process, though invention takes place across the writing process

Invitational Rhetoric

approaches communication as collaborative rather than argumentative or combative; the purpose of invitational rhetoric is understanding rather than persuasion

Kairos

refers to the timeliness of speech/writing: the opportune or right time for speech/writing; indications of why a text is timely or relevant

kairotic

Related to or characteristic of *kairos*; adjective used to describe something that happens at the right or opportune time; often combined with the word *moment*

keywords

a word (usually one of several) chosen to indicate or represent the content of a larger document or record in an index, catalog, or database

linguistic

of or relating to language; (also) of or relating to linguistics

Linguistics

the scientific study of language and its structure; specialized area of studies include theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, synchronous linguistics

literacy

the quality, condition, or state of being literate; the ability to read, write, speak; the ability to 'read' a specified subject or medium; competence or knowledge in a particular area

literature review

a summary and synthesis of other scholars' work that has previously been published on the topic that a given composition addresses; often found at the beginning of an academic article

logic

the reason or evidence for an argument

logical fallacies

flawed, deceptive, or false arguments that can be proven wrong with reasoning

logos

data or evidence for an argument; rhetorical logical appeals rely on reason, rationality, and often quantitative data

main idea

also known as thesis; an author’s central claim

medium

a system or channel through which a speaker or writer addresses their audience; an outlet that a sender uses to express meaning to their audience; can include written, verbal or nonverbal elements

Memory

the perpetuated knowledge or recollection (of something); that which is remembered of a person, object, or event; (good or bad) posthumous reputation; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past; the faculty by which things are remembered considered as residing in the awareness or consciousness of a particular individual or group

metacognition

awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes

methodology

the thinking surrounding a research process and selection of research methods; the answers to such questions as How do you decide what method is appropriate for a particular research project? How do you make data meaningful in a particular context?; a research methodology is the approach to a method, or the understanding and thinking that organizes a particular method

mixed methods

uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer a research question; produces numerical and non-numerical data, which can be collected using a variety of research instruments

MLA

the initialism for the Modern Language Association; the documentation style commonly used in English and other humanities courses

model texts

a term used to refer to texts that are often seen as examples of good and effective writing

modes

ways of presenting communication

multimodal composition

a composition that incorporates more than one mode of expression, such as text, image, audio, gesture, or video

multimodality

the employment of more than one mode: text, sound, voice, image

new literacies

new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology developments: instant messaging, blogging, social networking, conducting online searches . . .

new media

any media – from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts – that are delivered digitally

objective

impartial, detached approach

observe

notice or perceive (something) and register it as being significant

paraphrasing

translations of an author's or theorist's original idea into an author's own words that retain the detail of the original thought but include alternate sentence structure and wording

pathos

emotions or feeling; rhetorical pathetic appeals draw on an audience's emotions to support an argument

peer-reviewed

research that has been considered and shared by a community of experts

peer-reviewed source

research that has been considered and approved by a community of experts

personal anecdotes

narratives or first-person accounts; a small narrative incident meant to illustrate a personal experience related to a larger topic

persuasive discourse

language or writing that is likely to convince the reader or listener to adopt an idea, attitude, or action

philosophy

the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline

place

the material situation in which composition occurs; a rhetorical consideration for communication

Play the Believing Game

a practice developed by Peter Elbow that encourages audience members to suspend potential disbelief or critique of a text; approaching the text with the intent to actually believe whatever the author is suggesting

positivist

the assumption that there is one clear answer to a research question

pre-writing

the first stage of the writing process that include a combination of outlining, diagramming, storyboarding, and clustering; a way to record thoughts about a topic before trying to draft an organized text

prescriptive writing

is a traditional approach of grammar that tells people how to use the English language, what forms they should utilize, and what functions they should serve

primary research

information that has not yet been critiqued, interpreted or analyzed by a second (or third, etc) party; information gathered through first-hand or personal experience or study

primary source

texts that arise directly from a particular event or time period; any content that comes out of direct involvement with an event or a research study

productive failure

is a learning design that entails conditions for learners to persist in generating and exploring representations and solution methods for solving complex, novel problems

proximity

nearness in space, time, or relationship

public facing

written for a specific public

purpose

the author's motivations for creating the text

qualitative methods

methods that collect observable or discursive data, which may include opinions or experiences and which generate non-numerical data

quantitative methods

methods that collect and generate numerical or countable data

quoting

direct quotes are portions of an existing composition that are taken word for word and placed inside of a different work; these are denoted by the use of quotation marks and an in-text citation

reading pedagogies

is the principle methods of instruction that teachers use with students when teaching the principles, practices, and profession of teaching reading

recursive

move back and forth between various stages of a process, as both those engaging in a research process or a writing process do

reflection

the action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one's past life and experiences; contemplation, deep or serious thought or consideration; the process or faculty by which the mind observes and examines its own experiences and emotions; intelligent self-awareness, introspection, metacognition

research

primary - information that has not yet been critiqued, interpreted or analyzed by a second (or third, etc) party; information gathered through first-hand or personal experience or study

secondary - information gathered from another source or that has been interpreted or analyzed by someone else

research design

the overall strategy that chosen for the intergradation of different components of a study in a coherent and logical way

research ethics

moral principles that guide researchers to conduct and report research without deception or intention to harm the participants of the study or members of the society as a whole, whether knowingly or unknowingly; the evolving conventions, codes of conduct, and standards research communities adopt to protect audiences, authors, and their research contributions; the practice of striving for ethical development and circulation of research

research gap

in an academic article, the section that identifies what has not been said or examined by previous scholars; a space out of which a scholar's own research develops; an area where existing research does not provide enough scholarly information

research method

broadly refers to tools for collecting data; research methods may be qualitative, methods that collect discursive data that cannot be counted; quantitative, methods that collect numeric or countable data; and mixed, methods that draw on both quantitative and qualitative measures

research proposal

a detailed plan or 'blueprint' for the intended study and approach to design

research protocols

your plan for research

research question

a question that guides an academic study in such a way that the answer adds new knowledge to a field or discipline

Research questions

research strategy

a step-by-step plan of action that gives direction to your thoughts and efforts, enabling you to conduct research systematically and on schedule to produce quality results and detailed reporting

research strategy or design

a plan for finding the kinds of evidence and information that will aid in effectively answering a research question

rhetoric

both the study and use of strategic communication, or talk and text in social interaction; the way that rhetors/authors/writers/composers use language in order to communicate with an audience; the art of using language effectively so as to communicate with, persuade, or influence others

rhetorical analysis

the careful study of a text/speech where the context, audience, and purpose for discourse are considered; the process that helps demonstrate the significance of a text by carefully considering the rhetorical situation in which it develops and the ways that it supports its purpose

rhetorical approach

an approach that examines texts primarily as acts of communication or as performances rather than as static objects; the study of both production and reception of discourse

rhetorical context

(also known as rhetorical situation) the set of circumstances out of which a text arises, which includes attention to author, audience, purpose, setting, text

rhetorical genre studies

(a term coined by Aviva Freedman) are studies in which scholars examine genre as typified social action, as ways of acting based in recurrent social situations (the founding idea for which can be found in Carolyn R. Miller's essay "Genre as Social Action")

rhetorical listening

a particular method of listening developed by rhetoric scholar Krista Ratcliffe in which the listener is not trying to evaluate whether they agree or disagree with the speaker but instead listen to hear and identify with the speaker

rhetorical situation

(also known as rhetorical context) the context or set of circumstances out of which a text arises (author, audience, purpose, setting, text)

author - the creator of a text or speech; the person or organization who is communicating in order to try to effect a change in his or her audience

audience - any person or group who is the intended recipient of the text and also the person/people the author is trying to influence

purpose - the author's motivations for creating the text setting - the particular occasion or event that prompted the text's creation at the particular time it was created

text - the author's composition, including the format and medium in which it was composed

rhetorical theory

thoughts and assertation that have been made about rhetoric in a formal fashion

rhetorical topoi

in rhetoric, stock formulas such as puns, proverbs, cause and effect, and comparison, which rhetors use to produce arguments

rhetorical velocity

the state that happens when rhetoricians strategically theorize and anticipate the third party recomposition of their texts

rhetors

an orator or author who can be considered a master of rhetorical principles

Rogerian argument

a form of argumentation named after psychologist Carl Rogers who, in 1951, developed an argumentative structure so that people on different sides of an issue would have the experience of believing counterarguments; like invitational rhetoric, Rogerian Argument is similarly devised to build understanding amongst rhetors, particularly those who believe differently

scholarly journal

(also known as academic journal) a periodical that contains articles written by experts in a particular field of study, which are intended to be read by other experts or students of the field and may use more specialized or advanced language than the articles found in general magazines

scripts

the particular way you will describe your research to participants

secondary research

information gathered from another source or that has been interpreted or analyzed by someone else

secondary source

sources that summarize, interpret, critique, analyze, or offer commentary on primary sources; in a secondary source, an author's subject is not necessarily something that he/she/they directly experienced

semantic phase

a phase in research where you will be attentive to keywords in the text you've selected

sensorality

invites attention to the information we receive with our five senses (often minimized in Western rhetorical traditions)

setting

the particular occasion or event that prompted the text's creation at the particular time it was created

signal phrase

(also known as attributive tag) a device used to smoothly integrate quotations and paraphrases into a composition; a basic signal phrase consists of an author's name and an active verb indicating how the author is presenting the material

source

primary - texts that arise directly from a particular event or time period; any content that comes out of direct involvement with an event or a research study

secondary - sources that summarize, interpret, critique, analyze, or offer commentary on primary sources; in a secondary source, an author's subject is not necessarily something that he/she/they directly experienced

statistics

the systematic collection and arrangement of numerical facts or data of any kind

Style

the associated genre conventions with which an author chooses to compose; these conventions include tone, level of formality, choice of register, punctuation, and grammar and syntactical concerns

subjective

influenced by or based on personal beliefs or feelings, rather than based on facts

subjectivities

existing in the mind; belonging to the thinking subject rather than to the object of thought

summarizing

describing general ideas from a source such that the result is a shortened version that communicates the primary claims

synthesis

the composition or combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole

synthesize

to put together or combine into a complex whole; to make up by combination of parts or elements

tertiary

sources that identify and locate primary and secondary sources

text

refers to any form of communication, primarily written or oral, that forms a coherent unit, often as an object of study; A book can be a text, and a speech can be a text, but television commercials, magazine ads, website, and emails can also be texts.

The Aristotelian Appeals

Aristotle taught that a speaker's ability to persuade an audience is based on how well the speaker appeals to that audience in three different areas: logos, ethos, and pathos.

thesis

the author's central or main claim

threshold concept

is a concept that, once understood, changes the way that a person thinks about a topic

tone

a particular style in discourse or writing, which expresses the person's sentiment or reveals his/her/their character

transfer

the act of bringing knowledge or skills from one context to another; the goal of a first-year writing course is to transfer the writing skills developed in the class to other writing situations

transitional phrases

powerful links between ideas that aid a reader’s understandings of a text

uptake

the ways in which genres are circulated (or not); can be a measure of a genre’s success with an audience

utterance

a spoken word, statement, or vocal sound

vertical curriculum

a learning plan through which what students learn in one lesson, course, or grade level prepares them for the next lesson, course, or grade level

visual analysis

a method of understanding that focuses on visual elements, such as color, line, texture, and scale

visual rhetoric

the use of images to convey meaning or message in order to argue or persuade

Wikipedia

a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users; a public site on which anyone registered can create an article for publication and the non-registered can edit articles

works cited

at the end of academic articles, a list of all the works that authors considered or cited in designing their article

writer's block

the condition of being unable to think of what to write or how to proceed with writing

writing pedagogy

"is a body of knowledge consisting of theories of and research on teaching, learning, literacy, writing, and rhetoric, and the related practices that emerge. It is the deliberate integration of theory, research, personal philosophy, and rhetorical praxis into composition instruction at all levels from the daily lesson plan to the writing program and the communities it serves." – *A Guide to Composition Pedagogy*

writing process

an iterative, recursive process in which authors develop compositions

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
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VERSION HISTORY

This page lists major changes to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. These are marked with a whole 2.0 and a 0.1 increase, respectively, in the version number.

The Ask, 2nd Edition Version History

Version	Date	Change
2.0	August 25, 2025	Second edition published