1, 2, 3 Write!

1, 2, 3 Write!

A textbook for WR115 "Introduction to College Writing"

GAY MONTEVERDE

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GRESHAM, OR

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1, 2, 3 Write! retains a basic structure, several exercises and tables, and some nicely written explanations from *Writing for Success*, but about 75% of the original 96,000-word text was cut. Then, information on mechanics, expanded writing process steps, example readings, and a glossary was added. Chapters were organized to reflect a *1, 2, 3*-step process, moving from words to sentences to paragraphs to essays.

1, 2, 3, Write! is designed for college students who need further study in writing mechanics before tackling freshman composition.

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CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

Preview

This section of Ch. 1 will cover the following topics:

- using this textbook
- college vs. high school
- reading strategies
- college resources

Writing well is difficult. Even people who write for a living often struggle to get their thoughts on the page. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, college writing assignments can be stressful or intimidating.

But you cannot get through college without having to write–sometimes a lot and often at a higher level than you are used to. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. A good introductory writing course like WR115 will help you swim.

Using this Textbook

The chapters in this textbook are divided into sections. Each section begins with a green Preview box that lets you know what topics will be covered and ends with

an orange Takeaways box that highlights important points to remember. Red Tips boxes on the right side of the page provide interesting or helpful insights.

Exercises in blue boxes let you review the information presented. Work will be submitted in Blackboard; look for instructions there.

The following supplemental information is also available in the text:

- Blue underlined text is a link to outside materials. Click on it to view the material.
- Red text with a dotted underline is a link to a brief definition of the word. Click on it to view the definition. (If you print this book, the full Glossary will be at the end.)
- Purple boxes contain links to graphics. Click on the camera icon to view a PowerPoint presentation, video, or image.
- At the end of the book is an Appendix with guidelines about using research and citing sources. If that is something you need help with, feel free to read that information too.

You can read this text online throughout the term or you can download a PDF to your desktop for easy access. You can also print out a paper copy to read and annotate. Your choice!

College vs. High School

In college, expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity and quality of work increases. The table below summarizes some major differences between high school and college assignments.

High School	College
Teachers may set aside class time for reading and reviewing material.	You are expected to come to class with a basic understanding of material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing is primarily your responsibility.

High School	College
Your grade is determined by a wide variety of assessments, both minor and major. Many assessments are not writing-based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most are writing-based.
Writing assignments include personal and creative writing.	Except in creative writing courses, most writing assignments are **expository**.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally familiar.	You may be asked to master new formats or follow new standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers try to help students who are performing poorly, missing classes, or not turning in work. Often students get many "second chances."	Although teachers want students to succeed, they expect you to take steps to help yourself. "Second chances" are less common.

Reading Strategies

Most discussions and writing assignments–from brief responses to in-depth research papers–will require you to understand what you read. Following are some strategies for getting the most out of assigned readings.

Planning

To handle college reading successfully, you need to manage your time and know your purpose. "Time management" includes setting aside enough time to complete work and breaking assignments into manageable chunks. For example, if you are assigned a fifty-page chapter for next week's class, don't wait until the night before to start. Give yourself a few days and tackle one section at a time.

Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment–your purpose–helps you determine how much time to spend on it and helps you stay focused when tired or distracted. Sometimes your purpose is simply to understand the reading well enough to discuss it intelligently in class. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. You might read to compare two texts, to write a personal response, or to gather ideas for research.

Tip

When you start a reading assignment, identify your purpose and write it down on a sticky that you put on the first page of the book or on your computer screen. Keep that information nearby and refer to it occasionally as you read.

Improving Comprehension

In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including textbooks, articles, and scholarly journals. Your primary goal is to identify the main point, the idea the writer wants to communicate. Finding the main point helps you understand the details–the facts and explanations that develop and clarify the main point. It also helps you relate the reading to things you learned in class or in other assignments.

Sometimes that task is relatively easy. Textbooks have headings that identify main concepts and often include comprehension questions at the end of a chapter. (This text provides information in the Preview and Takeaways boxes.) Diagrams and charts can help you understand complex information. Non-fiction books and articles may have an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose. In long works, chapter titles give a sense of what is covered.

A good way to review and reinforce what you've learned is to discuss the reading with classmates. Discussions can help you determine whether your understanding is the same as that of your peers. They can also spark new ideas or insights.

Active Reading

The most successful students in college are active readers: students who engage in **purposeful** activities as they read. The best way to remember the information you read is to do something physical with it, something beyond just letting your eyes scan the page. For example, taking notes as you read helps your brain retain the information.

Tip

Stop occasionally and assess how well you understand what you are reading. If you aren't confident, go back and read it again. Don't just push ahead.

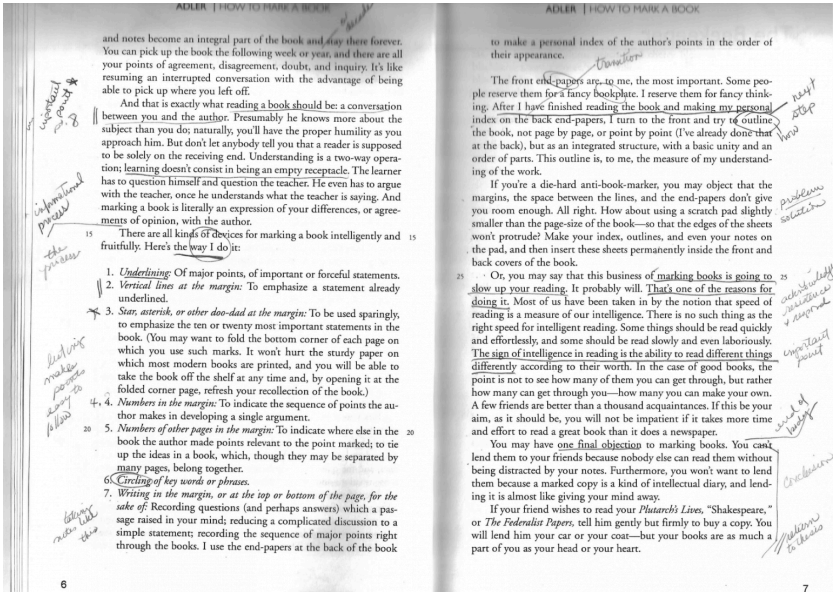
Exercise 1

There are many different ways to take notes, but the process does not need to be difficult or complicated to be effective. The essay "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler (link in Ch. 8) provides a simple technique that is effective and easy to personalize.

Print out the Adler essay. Read it through once. Then, read it a second time, marking the essay up using the process Adler explains.

Scan the annotated essay and save it as a PDF or take a correctly-oriented photo of the pages and submit the assignment.

Here is an example of what your marked-up essay should look like. You won't say exactly the same things; your notes are for you. But they should be thorough and useful.



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and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off.

And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.

There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it:

1. *Underlining:* Of major points, of important or forceful statements.
2. *Vertical lines at the margin:* To emphasize a statement already underlined.
3. *Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin:* To be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able to take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.)
4. *Numbers in the margin:* To indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
5. *Numbers of other pages in the margin:* To indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.
6. *Circling of key words or phrases.*
7. *Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of:* Recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book

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to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

The front end-papers are, to me, the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work.

If you're a die-hard anti-book-marker, you may object that the margins, the space between the lines, and the end-papers don't give you room enough. All right. How about using a scratch pad slightly smaller than the page-size of the book—so that the edges of the sheets won't protrude? Make your index, outlines, and even your notes on the pad, and then insert these sheets permanently inside the front and back covers of the book.

Or, you may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly, and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you—how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.

You may have one final objection to marking books. You can't lend them to your friends because nobody else can read them without being distracted by your notes. Furthermore, you won't want to lend them because a marked copy is a kind of intellectual diary, and lending it is almost like giving your mind away.

If your friend wishes to read your *Plutarch's Lives,* "Shakespeare," or *The Federalist Papers,* tell him gently but firmly to buy a copy. You will lend him your car or your coat—but your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.

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College Resources

If we try to handle every challenge alone, we can become frustrated and overwhelmed. Following are some helpful resources available at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC):

- **Your instructors** can clarify information and give you strategies to succeed. To contact an instructor, use the Saints email system or My Messages in Blackboard.
- **Tutors** will not write or edit your paper for you, but they can help you see, understand, and fix problems before you submit work for grading. Contact them at https://www.mhcc.edu/lsc/
- **Tech support** is available for Blackboard, Zoom, and Word. Call 503-491-7170

or email computer.tutor@mhcc.edu

- **Librarians** can quickly guide you to exactly the information you need. Contact them at https://www.mhcc.edu/library/
- **Free, confidential counseling services** can help a student cope with difficult personal situations or academic problems. They are available at https://www.mhcc.edu/Personal-Counseling/

Many students are reluctant to seek help. They feel like doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up but feel over your head, ask for help as early as possible. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Takeaways

- College reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments in quantity and quality.
- Managing college successfully requires you to plan ahead, divide work into smaller, manageable tasks, and set aside sufficient time for study.
- Learning to read purposefully and actively is crucial to succeeding in college. Taking notes is the best way to retain information.
- Many resources are available to help with writing and other aspects of college life. Ask for help when you need it.

CHAPTER 2: WORDS

2.1 Word Confusion
2.2 Word Choice

2.1 Word Confusion

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- frequently misspelled words
- commonly confused words
- homonyms

Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection leads to more effective writing. This chapter covers common word errors and how to correct them.

Frequently Misspelled Words

Spellcheckers are useful, but they cannot replace human knowledge and judgment. Writers are responsible for the errors in their work.

Below is a list of words that are often misspelled. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the part of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. Read through the list, noting words that are problematic for you.

across	dis**app**oint	in**teg**ration	partic**ul**ar	sep**ar**ate
a**dd**ress	disap**pr**ove	in**tell**igent	**per**form	sim**ilar**
ans**w**er	does**n**'t	int**ere**st	**per**haps	**sin**ce
arg**u**ment	eig**hth**	int**er**fere	pers**onn**el	sp**ee**ch

athlete	embarrass	jewelry	possess	strength
beginning	environment	judgment	possible	success
behavior	exaggerate	knowledge	prefer	surprise
calendar	familiar	maintain	prejudice	taught
career	finally	mathematics	privilege	temperature
conscience	government	meant	probably	thorough
crowded	grammar	necessary	psychology	thought
definite	height	nervous	pursue	tired
describe	illegal	occasion	reference	until
desperate	immediately	opinion	rhythm	weight
different	important	optimist	ridiculous	written

Exercise 1

Find the 10 misspelled words in the following paragraphs. List them, spelled correctly.

(Note: "Lenapi" is not misspelled; it is the name of a native American tribe. "Breuckelen" is also not misspelled. Look for common words.)

> Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, niether the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants.
>
> When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized groups of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or died in conflicts with European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completly by the British.
>
> In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies permanently.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan became much easier. Then, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. In some people's opinion, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they thought Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Note: Homework and essays in this class should use MLA formatting guidelines (see Ch. 7.3 for details).

Commonly Confused Words

As you study this information, pay special attention to words that are challenging for you.

Tip

In addition to a definition, these words are identified by their **part of speech**. For more about parts of speech, see Ch. 3.

A, An, And

- **A** (article) is used before nouns that begin with a consonant: **a** key, **a** mouse, **a** screen
- **An** (article) used before nouns that begin with a vowel: **an** airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo
- **And** (conjunction) connects two or more words: peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil

Accept, Except

- **Accept** (verb) means to take or agree to something offered: They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.
- **Except** (conjunction) means only or but: We could fly **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- **Affect** (verb) means to create a change: Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.
- **Effect** (noun) means an outcome or result: Heavy rains will have an **effect** on crops.

Its, It's

- **Its** (pronoun) shows possession: The butterfly flapped **its** wings.
- **It's** (contraction) joins the words "it" and "is": **It's** a beautiful butterfly.

Loose, Lose

- **Loose** (adjective) describes something that is not tight or is detached: Without a belt, his pants are **loose** at the waist.
- **Lose** (verb) means to forget, give up, or fail to earn something: She will **lose** more weight while training for the marathon.

Of, Have

- **Of** (preposition) means from or about: I studied maps **of** the city.
- **Have** (verb) means to possess something: I **have** friends help me move.
- **Have** (linking verb) is also used to connect verbs: I should **have** helped her. (NOT "I should **of** helped her.)

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- **Quite** (adverb) means to a significant degree: My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
- **Quiet** (adjective) means not loud: I need a **quiet** room to study.

- **Quit** (verb) means to stop or to end: I will **quit** when I am tired.

Than, Then

- **Than** (conjunction) is used to connect two or more items when comparing: Registered nurses have less training **than** doctors.
- **Then** (adverb) means at a specific time: Doctors first complete medical school and **then** open a practice.

Their, They're, There

- **Their** (pronoun) shows possession: The Townsends feed **their** dogs twice a day.
- **They're** (contraction of a pronoun and a verb) joins the words "they" and "are": **They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- **There** (adverb) indicates a particular place: The dogs' bowls are over **there,** by the table.
- **There** (pronoun) is also used to introduce a sentence in which the verb comes before the subject: **There** are more treats handed out if the dogs behave. Often this kind of sentence is better if reorganized: More treats are handed out if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- **To** (preposition) indicates movement: Let's go **to** the circus.
- **To** also completes a certain type of verb: **to** play, **to** ride, **to** watch.
- **Two** (adjective) is the number after one and it describes how many: **Two** clowns squirted elephants with water.
- **Too** (adverb) means also or very: The crowd was **too** loud, so we left.

Who's, Whose

- **Who's** (contraction) joins the pronoun "who" and the verb "is" or "has": **Who's** the new student? **Who's** met him?
- **Whose** (pronoun) shows possession: **Whose** schedule allows them to take the new student tour?

Your, You're

- **Your** (pronoun) shows possession: **Your** book bag is unzipped.
- **You're** (contraction) joins the pronoun "you" and the verb "are": **You're** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Exercise 2

Type the following sentences, choosing the correct word from those in **parentheses**. Refer to the rules above so your answers are correct.

1. My little cousin turns _____ (to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____ (quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _____ (Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____ (than, then) a chocolate muffin.
5. I don't care _____ (whose, who's) coming to the party.
6. Do you have any _____ (loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must _____ (have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. The party _____ (their, there, they're) hosting will be in June at _____ (their, there, they're) ranch, and we are planning to be _____ (their, there, they're).
9. It must be fall, because _____ (it's, its) getting darker earlier.
10. Four animals live in my house: _____ (a, an, and) cat, _____ (a, an, and) owl, _____ (a, an, and) two old dogs.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like each other but have different meanings. For example, a witch rides a broom, but the word "which" is a question word when choosing between options.

Following is a list of commonly confused homonyms. Read through the list, paying particular attention to words you have found confusing in the past.

Lead, Led

- **Lead** can be used in several ways. As a noun, is can name a type of metal: The **lead** pipes in my home need to be replaced. It can also refer to a position of advantage: Our team is in the **lead**. As a verb, it can mean to guide or direct: The girl will **lead** the horse by its halter.
- **Led** (verb) is the past tense of "lead": The young volunteer **led** the patrons through the museum.

Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen** (verb) means to reduce in number, size, or degree: My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.
- **Lesson** (noun) is reading or exercise for a student: Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

Passed, Past

- **Passed** (verb) means to move: He **passed** slower cars using the left lane.
- **Past** (noun) means having taken place before the present: T he argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Principle, Principal

- **Principle** (noun) is a fundamental concept that is accepted as true: The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for peace.
- **Principal** (noun) has two meanings. It can mean the original amount of debt

on which interest is calculated: The payment covered both principal and interest. Or it can mean a person who is the main authority of a school: The **principal** held a conference for parents and teachers.

Threw, Through

- **Threw** (verb) is the past tense of the word "throw": She **threw** the football with perfect form.
- **Through** (preposition) indicates movement: She walked **through** the door and out of his life. (Note: "Thru" is a non-standard spelling of "through" and should be avoided.)

Where, Wear

- **Where** (adverb) is the place in which something happens: **Where** is the restaurant?
- **Wear** (verb) is to carry or have on the body: I **wear** my hiking shoes when I climb.

Whether, Weather

- **Whether** (conjunction) means expressing a doubt or choice: I don't know **whether** to go to Paris or Hawaii.
- **Weather** (noun) is a quality of the atmosphere: The **weather** could be rainy.

Exercise 3

Type the following sentences, choosing the correct homonym from the options in parentheses. Refer to the rules above to ensure that you choose the correct word.

1. I _____ (where, wear) my pajamas to attend online classes.
2. Being _____ (led, lead) up the mountain by a guide felt safer.
3. Serina described _____ (witch, which) book was hers.
4. Do you think it is healthy for Grandpa to talk about the _____ (passed, past) all the time?
5. Eating healthier foods will _____ (lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
6. Everyone goes _____ (through, threw) hardships in life.
7. The _____ (weather, whether) continued to be unpredictable.
8. The _____ (principal, principle) gave the students a long lecture about peer pressure.

The English language contains about 200,000 words. Some are borrowed from other languages. Some have multiple meanings and forms. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Takeaways

- Error-free spelling enhances your credibility with readers.
- Differentiating homonyms can reduce confusion.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on readers.

2.2 Word Choice

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- using a dictionary and a thesaurus
- recognizing connotations
- avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words

If you have always been an avid reader, your vocabulary is probably large and you generally use words correctly. The best time to develop language skills is as a child, but it's never too late to start. The more you read, the larger your vocabulary gets and the more the rules of language use are automatically embedded in your brain. But studying how to use words can also expand your vocabulary and increase your ability to use words correctly.

Use a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meaning, spelling, pronunciation, and use of some words. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from beginners to professionals, can benefit from using a dictionary and a thesaurus.

Most good dictionaries provide the following information:

- Spelling: how the word and its different forms are spelled
- Pronunciation: how to say the word

- Part of speech: the function of the word in a sentence
- Definition: the meaning or meanings of the word
- Synonyms: words that have similar meanings
- Etymology: the history of the word

Look at the following dictionary entry and see if you can identify parts from the list above:

> **myth**, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story, having no existence in fact.—myth • ic, myth • i • cal

A thesaurus gives a list of synonyms and antonyms for a word. A thesaurus can help you find the perfect word to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words.

Here is an example thesaurus entry. It gives the word, its part of speech, an example of its use, and synonyms and antonyms.

> **precocious** adj., She's such a precocious child.: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever. Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Every time you use a dictionary or a thesaurus, the number of ways you can express yourself grows.

Tip

Never simply replace one word with another unless you are sure you know what the replacement word means!

Recognize Connotations

"Denotation" is the dictionary definition of a word, its literal meaning. A "conno-

tation" is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Look at the differences illustrated here:

Scrawny

- Literal definition (denotation): exceptionally thin and slight
- In a sentence: Although he was a scrawny child, Martin developed into a strong man.
- Connotation: negative. In this sentence, the word "scrawny" implies weak or flawed.

Skinny

- Literal definition (denotation): having little fat
- In a sentence: Skinny jeans have become very fashionable.
- Connotation: positive. In this sentence, the word "skinny" has positive cultural and personal overtones. Connotations can change over time. For example, in the past, "skinny" had only negative connotations, meaning less than normal.

Lean

- Literal definition (denotation): lacking or deficient in flesh
- In a sentence: My brother is lean, but I have a more muscular build.
- Connotation: neutral. The word "lean" does not evoke an overly thin person like the word "scrawny," nor does it imply the positive cultural impressions of the word "skinny." It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

These words have very similar denotative meanings; however, their connotations differ dramatically. Obviously, writers want to use words with correct literal meaning, but writers must also keep connotative meanings in mind when choosing a word.

Exercise 1

For each of the words listed below, identify two **synonyms**. One should have a positive connotation and one a negative connotation.

For example:

dog: pet (positive), mutt (negative)

1. Smell
2. Liar
3. Proud
4. Young
5. Private

Avoid Slang and Clichés

Slang is informal words that are non-standard English. "Non-standard" means "not accepted by most people as correct." Slang is language used by a specific group and often changes over time as new fads appear. For example, the word "cool" was common slang in the 1960s, whereas "cold" is common slang these days. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context, but should be avoided in professional or academic writing.

Clichés are expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. For example, the phrase "fluffy white clouds" is boring because we've heard it a million times. The poet Rupert Brooke called clouds "rounds of snow." Better, right? We aren't all poets, but writing that uses clichés suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés will help your writing feel original and fresh. Here is an example:

- Cliché: When my brother and I have an argument, he says things that **make my blood boil.**
- Better: When my brother and I have an argument, he says things that make me really angry.
- Original: When my brother and I have an argument, he says things that make me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Exercise 2

Identify a casual word that you use frequently that is acceptable in conversation but not in the kind of formal writing expected in college. Write a sentence using the word, underlining it. Then rewrite the sentence replacing the casual word with a more formal option that means the same thing.

For example:

- Casual sentence: When he doesn't get what he wants, he's a **jerk**.
- Revised sentence: When he doesn't get what he wants, he behaves badly.

(Don't pick a texting abbreviation, such as "LOL" or "OMG." They are casual and should be avoided in formal writing, but this assignment is looking for actual words.)

Then, identify one cliché that you have used in the past. Write a sentence using the cliché and underline it. Then rewrite the sentence replacing the cliché with a more original option that means the same thing.

For example:

- Cliché sentence: In this job, it's important to **think outside of the box**.
- Revised sentence: In this job, it's important to think creatively.

Avoid Overly General Words

General words are vague and boring. Specific words and images make writing more interesting to read. Details bring words to life. They provide color, texture, sound, even smell.

Which sentence in each pair is more visual?

- My new puppy is cute.
- My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with eyes like black olives.

- My teacher told us plagiarism is bad.
- My teacher, Ms. Atwater, told us that plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Notice that it isn't the use of fancy words that makes an image vivid; it's the use of specific examples.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words (in bold) with more precise and interesting language. Don't overdo; just add some specific detail.

1. My sister's new hair style was **interesting**.
2. The **good** dog got a cookie.
3. The farmer was **tired** after a long day.
4. She thought the guy at the next table was **cute**.
5. Santiago worked **hard** on the brick patio.

Takeaways

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus regularly will expand your vocabulary.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative. Be aware of connotations when choosing words.
- Slang, cliches, and overly general words should be avoided in writing.

CHAPTER 3: PARTS OF SPEECH

3.1 Nouns and Capitalization
3.2 Pronouns
3.3 Verbs
3.4 Adjectives and Adverbs
3.5 Prepositions
3.6 Conjunctions and Interjections

3.1 Nouns and Capitalization

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- understanding the system called "parts of speech"
- a noun's job
- common and proper nouns
- capitalization rules

There are two ways to be a more correct writer:

- read a lot
- study grammar

If you read lots of books as a child and continued to read over the years, chances are your writing is already correct. Why? Because your brain absorbed the structures and systems we call "standard English usage" as you read. You may not be able to recite the rules, but you use them correctly when you write.

If you aren't much of a reader, you probably also struggle with writing to some extent. But it is never too late! Reading as an adult will help you write more correctly. In the meantime, you can learn to avoid common mistakes by studying grammar.

Why does writing correctly matter? Writing correctly is part of how students are graded in every academic class that involves writing (and that is most classes). But writing correctly is also important after college. Stop now and read the essay "I

Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar. Here's Why" by Karl Wiens (a link is in Ch. 8). This will give you an inside look at what many employers think about writing skills.

Writers who want to write more correctly need to study grammar so they can consciously make correct choices. Does it take work? Yes. But success is possible and, like every challenge in life, this one won't get better until you deal with it. The information in this chapter will get you closer to the kind of writing you want to be able to do.

The "8 Parts of Speech"

"Parts of speech" is the system we use to explain how to build sentences–which word goes where, why, and in what form.

Even if you struggle with writing, your brain already has a pretty good grasp of how this system works. For example, you know there is something wrong with this sentence:

I love dog my.

If I asked you to explain the problem, I doubt you would say, "The possessive pronoun 'my' is being used as an adjective here, to show who owns the dog, and in English, adjectives usually come before the noun they modify." But you've heard enough correct examples that your brain automatically sees the problem. The sentence should be: I love my dog.

Can you spot the more subtle errors in the following sentences?

- The two best things about the party was the music and the food. (Error: subject/verb agreement. The verb "was" does not agree with the subject "things." It should be "were.")
- Natalie found a sparkly girl's bracelet on the sidewalk. (Error: misplaced modifier. It's not a sparkly girl, it's a sparkly bracelet.)
- When John's dog came back, he was so happy. (Error: unclear pronoun reference. Who was happy? The dog or John?)

The label "part of speech" refers to what job a word is doing in a sentence. There are eight parts of speech in English. In other words, there are eight possible jobs. Here is a list, with brief job descriptions:

1. **noun:** names a person, place, thing, or idea
2. **pronoun:** used in place of a noun to avoid repetition
3. **adjective:** modifies a noun or pronoun
4. **verb:** shows action, links subjects with words that describe them, or helps other verbs do those things
5. **adverb:** modifies verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs
6. **preposition:** shows the position of something or someone in space and time
7. **conjunction:** connects words, **phrases**, or clauses
8. **interjection:** shows surprise or emotion

In Ch. 3, we will study these eight parts of speech, one at a time and in depth.

Graphics

This PowerPoint presentation is a visual review of the parts of speech. Click on the image below to open it and work through the slides.

What Is a Noun?

The simplest words in English are nouns; they are easy to understand and found everywhere. To understand how English is structured, start by understanding what nouns do and how to find them in sentences.

A noun is a word that names people, places, things, or ideas.

Remember that "part of speech" is what job a word is doing in a sentence. "Nam-

ing" is a noun's job. All of the following words are nouns because they name someone or something:

rabbit, tangerine, paper clip, Mars, pride, student, Alaska

Most nouns are things you can see (like a mouse or the sun), but nouns also name ideas (like faith or democracy).

Proper Nouns

There are two types of nouns: proper and common. Proper nouns name **specific** people, places, things, or ideas. For example:

- people: Shakespeare, Jean
- places: Paris, Gresham, the South
- things: Kleenex, Geology 101, Oreos
- ideas: Buddhism, Reconstruction

Proper nouns can be more than one word, but they still name one thing. For example:

- people: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Bill Gates, Billie Eilish
- places: New York City, Republic of Ireland
- things: House of Representatives, MacBook Pro
- ideas: Harlem Renaissance, Green New Deal

The following types of words are usually proper nouns:

- deities, religions, religious followers, sacred books (Allah, Catholic, Protestants, the Torah)
- family relationship when used as a name (Mom, Grandpa Lenz)
- nationalities, languages, races, tribes (Italian, Japanese, African American, Apache)
- educational institutions, departments, specific courses (Mt. Hood Community College, Humanities Department, Writing 115)
- government departments, organizations, political parties (Army Corps of

Engineers, Doctors Without Borders, Democratic Party)
- historical movements, periods, events, documents (Black Lives Matter, the Renaissance, March Madness, Declaration of Independence)
- trade names (Apple, Xerox, Newman's Own)
- months, holidays, days of the week–but not seasons (July, Yom Kippur, Friday, but not winter)
- titles when used as part of a person's name–but not when used alone (Governor Brown, but not governor of Oregon)
- titles of books, movies, CDs (*The Hunger Games,* "Bohemian Rhapsody," *Back to Black*)

Tip

Proper nouns are always capitalized.

Common nouns are never capitalized, unless they are the first word of a sentence.

Common Nouns

Common nouns name **general** people, places, things, or ideas. For example:

- people: students, aunt, dog
- places: river, country, home
- things: aquarium, car, hamburger, rose
- ideas: democracy, love, happiness, religion

Common nouns, like proper nouns, can be more than one word, but they still name one thing. For example:

- people: homeless person, state representative
- places: high school, swimming pool
- things: printer cartridge, washing machine
- ideas: civil rights, public speaking

Nouns of more than one word are called **compound nouns.** The two words together have a meaning that is different from the two separate words. For example, a "state" is one thing, a "representative" is another thing, and a "state representative" has a third, slightly different meaning. Sometimes compound nouns

are written as one word ("greenhouse") or hyphenated ("mother-in-law"). Check a dictionary to be sure.

Changing Jobs

Sometimes words can be a proper noun in one sentence but a common noun in another. For example:

- My sister Fern loves ferns. ("Fern" is a proper noun because it is a specific person's name, but "ferns" is a common noun because it names a general type of plant.)
- My mother said she was tired, but Dad was ready to go. ("mother" is a common noun here because it names the relationship, but "Dad" is what we call him, so it's a proper noun.)
- When Obama was President, he called the president of my garden club. ("President" is only capitalized when it refers to the President of the United States, not when it refers to someone like the "president of my garden club.")

Graphics

Cartoon videos are an easy way to review the information you studied. Click on the icon below to view a video about nouns:

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences. Double space the text.

1. Toby studies film at the University of New Mexico.
2. I spend time in the garden because it is so peaceful.
3. Blues guitar is my very favorite music.
4. Rats! The noisiest dog on our block just had puppies.
5. John lives in Oregon now, but he previously lived in California, Alaska, Texas, and Massachusetts.

Identify which words in the above sentence are nouns by highlighting them in yellow. Remember that a noun can be proper or common and also can sometimes be more than one word.

> For example: The fox jumped over the sleeping German Shepherd, then ran silently away.

The word "fox" is a common noun and one word. "German Shepherd" is a proper noun made up of two words.

When you have finished this exercise, keep it handy; you will continue to work on these same sentences as you proceed through Ch. 3.

Capitalization

Knowing what to capitalize is not difficult: there are only a few rules.

Why are rules of capitalization in a chapter about nouns? Because one of the main ways capital letters are used is to differentiate between proper and common nouns.

Proper nouns are always capitalized. Common nouns are not capitalized. The following table illustrates the differences:

common noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*
college	Smith College
war	Spanish-American War
historical event	Renaissance

Besides proper nouns, there are just a few other capitalization rules:

- **The pronoun "I" is always capitalized**: It's time I settled down and found a job.
- **The first word in every sentence is capitalized**: Peaches taste best when they are cold.
- **The first word in a sentence-length quotation is capitalized**: The college president asked, "What can we do to attract more students?"
- **The first, last, and main words in a title are capitalized**: I found a copy of Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* at a yard sale.

That's it. The challenge is not understanding when to capitalize. It's just remembering to do it.

Exercise 2

Type up the following sentences, correcting any capitalization errors.

1. my best friend's name is judy and i met her in alaska.
2. Last term, I read a book called *the thing with feathers* by noah stryker.
3. If the movie is that bad, i have to ask, "why spend your money?"
4. uncle jack smoked cigars and drank too much, but He loved his wife and son.
5. Mt. Hood community college is offering some face-to-face classes now.

Takeaways

- Understanding parts of speech is the first step in understanding how writing works.
- A noun names a person, place, thing, or idea.
- Nouns are either proper or common.
- Always capitalize the following:
    - proper nouns
    - the pronoun "I"
    - the first word in every sentence
    - the first word in a sentence-length quote
    - the first, last, and main words in a title.

3.2 Pronouns

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- a pronoun's job
- fixing common pronoun problems

Pronouns cause more trouble than nouns. To master pronouns, start by noticing the word "pronoun" has "noun" embedded in it. That gives us a hint that they are related, and you already know what a noun is.

What Is a Pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun to avoid repetition.

Here is an example of how pronouns work:

> Maria threw the boomerang and it came back to her. ("it" and "her" are pronouns)

If there were no pronouns, writing and speaking would be tedious and repetitive. The above sentence would be written like this:

> Maria threw the boomerang and the boomerang came back to Maria.

The noun that is being replaced by the pronoun is called its antecedent. "Maria" is the antecedent of "her" and "boomerang" is the antecedent of "it."

Compared to nouns, there are very few pronouns. Following is a pretty complete list. Read through it to get familiar with the kind of words that work as pronouns.

all	she	no one	they
another	her	nothing	this
any	hers	one	those
anyone	herself	our	us
anybody	I	ours	you
anything	it	ourselves	your
both	its	several	yours
each	itself	some	yourself
either	many	somebody	yourselves
everybody	me	someone	we
everyone	my	something	what
everything	myself	that	which
few	mine	their	whichever
he	most	theirs	who
him	neither	them	whom
himself	nobody	themselves	whoever
his	none	these	whomever

Pronouns can be divided into lots of different types: personal, possessive, reflexive, intensive, indefinite, demonstrative, interrogative, relative, etc. Don't let that overwhelm you. Pronouns all have the same basic job: they replace nouns to avoid repetition.

Correcting Pronoun Errors

Pronoun errors are the second most common error in college writing (comma errors are #1), so it is worth your time to study pronouns and understand how to use them correctly.

The three most common pronoun errors are these:

- unclear pronoun reference
- lack of noun/pronoun agreement
- shifts in person

Error #1: Unclear Pronoun Reference

If we don't understand which noun the pronoun has replaced, that is called an "unclear pronoun reference." For example:

> Before syncing my phone with my laptop, I deleted everything on it. (What does the pronoun "it" refer to? The phone or the laptop? This is an example of an unclear pronoun reference.)

A clearer explanation would be this:

> I deleted everything on my phone before syncing it with my laptop. (Now "it" clearly refers to the phone.)

Error #2: Lack of Noun/Pronoun Agreement

Pronouns must agree in number with the nouns to which they refer. If the noun is singular, the pronoun replacing it should also be singular. If the noun is plural, the pronoun replacing it should be plural. For example:

The parrot (singular) sat on its (singular) perch.

The parrots (plural) sat on their (plural) perches.

When referring to several people, which pronoun to use can be confusing. For example:

Sexist: An actor must share his emotions.

Not sexist, but awkward: An actor must share her or his emotions.

A better fix: Actors must share their emotions.

Although many singular pronouns in English reflect a specific gender (he, she, him, her), most plural pronouns do not (they, them, their, we, us).

Error #3: Shifts in Person

To understand what "person" means, imagine a conversation between three people. The first person would speak using "I." That person would talk to a second person using "you." When they talk about a third person, they use "he," "she" or "they."

- First person pronouns: I, me, mine, we, us, ours
- Second person pronouns: you, yours
- Third person pronouns: he, him, his, she, her, they, them, theirs, one, anyone, it, its

Tip

People in the transgender and gender nonconforming communities often use the pronoun "they" to refer to one person. In the past, we would not say, "Mason has a new cat because **they** love cats." But respect for an individual's identity is an important part of the evolution of language.

Don't assume which pronoun a person uses. It is okay to politely ask people their pronoun.

First, second, and third person should not be incorrectly mixed. That is called "shifts in person." For example:

> With our delivery service, customers can pay when they order or when you receive the groceries. ("Customers" is third person; "you," which is second person, is a shift in person.)

Here is how the sentence should read:

> With our delivery service, customers can pay when they order or when they receive the groceries."

Tip

Don't use second person ("you") in college or business writing. It is too casual. Use first person ("I") or third person ("she," "he," "them") instead.

Three More Quick Pronoun Guidelines

1. The words "who," "whom," and "whose" refer only to people. The word "which" refers to things. The word "that" can refer to people or things. Never write "I have a dog **who** bites."
2. To decide whether to use "me" or "I," take out the other person's name and see if the sentence sounds right: "The teacher looked at ~~Maria and~~ I." sounds wrong. "The teacher looked at ~~Maria and~~ me." is correct.
3. Never put a pronoun directly after a noun. For example: "**Christine she** went to work earlier than usual." The correct version is "Christine went to work earlier than usual."

The above information should give you everything you need to use pronouns correctly. Study the information until you actually understand it.

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences, correcting any pronoun errors. Don't guess. Refer to the information above and figure out the correct answers.

1. The children they were behaving badly.
2. Natalie and me went shopping on Friday.
3. The teacher gave Makayla her notes.
4. Any actor attending the play audition should bring his own lunch.
5. Kevin is a man which has high standards.
6. An employee is only successful if he or she works hard.

Graphics

To review pronouns, watch this great cartoon video:

Exercise 2

Go back to the sentences you worked with in Ch. 3.1. They are repeated here, as a reminder.

1. Toby studies film at the University of New Mexico.
2. I spend time in the garden because it is so peaceful.
3. Blues guitar is my very favorite music.
4. Rats! The noisiest dog on our block just had puppies.
5. John lives in Oregon now, but he previously lived in California, Alaska, Texas, and Massachusetts.

You marked the nouns by highlighting them in yellow. If you made any errors previously, correct them now.

Then, look for any words in the sentences that are pronouns. Highlight them in orange. Most sentences have nouns; some sentences will have pronouns and some won't.

(Note: If the version of Word you are using does not have an orange highlight option, you can change the font color to orange rather than black.)

Takeaways

- A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun to avoid repetition.
- Pronoun errors are very common and include unclear pronoun reference, noun/pronoun agreement problems, and shifts in person.

3.3 Verbs

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- a verb's job
- dealing with verb tense
- managing irregular verbs

Verbs may be the most important part of speech. Why? Because every sentence **has** to have at least one verb. For example:

Stop!

That is a complete sentence. It has what is called a "you understood" subject (the subject is not written, but we "understand" the command is directed at someone). It has a verb: "stop." And it expresses a complete thought.

You can't have a sentence without a verb, no matter how many words you write. For example:

> The small black dog in my backyard with floppy ears and a long tail.

That's a fragment. Why? Because it doesn't have a verb.

Tip

Learning about verbs will help you avoid writing sentence fragments.

What Is a Verb?

A verb shows action or a state of being. The verb in a sentence is what the **subject** is doing. (More about subjects in Ch. 4.1.)

Action verbs are easy: they are words like "walk," "study," "wait," and "dance." They describe something happening. For example:

> The raccoon ate the pizza box. ("ate" is what the raccoon did. "ate" is the verb.)

But then it gets more complicated.

A verb can also link subjects with words that describe them. Try think of "linking" as an action. Common linking verbs include "is," "am," "are," "was," "seem," "became," and "look." For example:

> Emmett is a small black dog. ("is" links the subject "Emmett" with the description "a small black dog." Therefore "is" is a verb.)

Often a verb is one word, but a verb can also be two or more words. These are called verb phrases. For example:

> We have taken many trips together. ("have taken" is a verb phrase.)

Verb Tense

Verbs not only tell us what is happening, they tell us **when** it is happening. This is called verb tense. For example:

- I **walk** to school. (present tense: I am doing it now.)
- I **walked** to school. (past tense: I used to do it.)
- I **will walk** to school. (future tense: I am going to do it.)

When the action is happening is communicated by the tense of the verb: "walk," "walked," "will walk."

Generally, verb tense should remain consistent in a piece of writing. If you start in present tense, stay there, or if you start in past tense, stay there. For example:

> I **walked** to school on Tuesday. When I **arrived**, I **saw** my teacher. She **told** me to get to class quickly. I **ran** through the door, **sat** in my chair, and **took** a deep breath. (Notice that all of the bolded verbs are past tense.)

However, there are times when we want to shift tense to let a reader know things happened at different times. For example:

> *To Kill a Mockingbird* **is** Harper Lee's most famous book. It **received** a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961. Lee **died** in 2016, but her book **will remain** one of the most compassionate novels in American literature.

Her book **is** currently famous. She **received** a prize and **died** in the past. Her book **will remain** great into the future. All those events happened at different times and we change the tense of the verb to let the reader know when.

Exercise 1

Type up the following paragraph, inserting the correct form of the verb, whether present, past, or future tense.

> The Dust Bowl _____ (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s. The Dust Bowl mostly _____ (affects, affected, will affect) Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. Dust storms _____ (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl _____ (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for several years. When early settlers _____ (move, moved, will move) into these areas, they _____ (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses to plant crops and graze cattle. They did not _____ (realize, realized, will realize) the grasses kept the soil in place. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains _____ (arrive, arrived, will arrive).

Irregular Verbs

The most troublesome thing about English verbs is that many are "irregular." Regular verbs change to past tense by adding "d" or "ed." For example:

walk → walked

type → typed

dance → danced

But irregular verbs change in irregular ways. For example:

sell → sold

is → was

think → thought

The best way to learn about irregular verbs is simply to get familiar with them. Read through the list below, and notice any verbs which have caused you problems in the past:

Present → Past	Present → Past	Present → Past
be → was, were	give → gave	sell → sold
become → became	go → went	send → sent
begin → began	grow → grew	set → set
blow → blew	have → had	shake → shook
break → broke	hear → heard	shine → shone (shined)
bring → brought	hide → hid	shrink → shrank (shrunk)
build → built	hold → held	sing → sang
burst → burst	hurt → hurt	sit → sat
buy → bought	keep → kept	sleep → slept
catch → caught	know → knew	speak → spoke
choose → chose	lay → laid	spend → spent
come → came	lead → led	spring → sprang
cut → cut	leave → left	stand → stood
dive → dove (dived)	let → let	steal → stole
do → did	lose → lost	strike → struck
draw → drew	make → made	swim → swam
drink → drank	mean → meant	swing → swung
drive → drove	meet → met	take → took
eat → ate	pay → paid	teach → taught

Present → Past	Present → Past	Present → Past
fall → fell	put → put	tear → tore
feed → fed	quit → quit	tell → told
feel → felt	read → read	think → thought
fight → fought	ride → rode	throw → threw
find → found	ring → rang	understand → understood
fly → flew	rise → rose	wake → woke
forget → forgot	run → ran	wear → wore
forgive → forgave	say → said	win → won
freeze → froze	see → saw	wind → wound
get → got	seek → sought	

Graphics

To review verbs, watch this great cartoon video:

Exercise 2

Go back to the sentences you used in Ch. 3.1.

You have already identified the nouns by highlighting them in yellow and the pronouns by highlighting them in orange. If you made any errors, correct them.

Now, identify which words in the sentences are verbs by highlighting them in red. (Hint: The verbs are what the nouns and pronouns are doing.)

Keep this exercise for further work in Ch. 3.

Takeaways

- Using verbs correctly is challenging but important to writing clearly.
- Verb tense helps a writer explain when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense, but irregular verbs do not.

3.4 Adjectives and Adverbs

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- the jobs of adjectives and adverbs
- avoiding common errors

Adjectives and adverbs modify or add information to other words. Adjectives and adverbs make writing more interesting.

For example, "cat" is a simple noun and "ran" is a simple verb, but "The silky spotted cat ran swiftly and silently." is much more interesting than "The cat ran." "Silky" and "spotted" are adjectives; "swiftly" and "silently" are adverbs.

Tip

To "modify" means to add to something, to change or improve it by adding information. Notice "**ad**jective" and "**ad**verb" both begin with "**ad**"?

Adjectives

Adjectives modify only nouns and pronouns.

An adjective answers questions such as which one, what kind, what color, or what shape.

To find an adjective, first find the nouns and pronouns. Then, look around to see if any words add information to those nouns and pronouns.

Here is an example of adjectives modifying nouns:

> The head librarian helped me find history books on famous writers. ("librarian," "books" and "writers" are all nouns. "head" is an adjective that tells us which librarian; "history" is an adjective that tells us what kind of book; "famous" is an adjective that tells us what kind of writers.)

Here is an example of an adjective modifying a pronoun:

> She is tall. ("tall" is an adjective that describes the size of the pronoun "She.")

A Word About Articles

The words "a," "an" and "the" are special types of adjectives called **articles**. They modify nouns and pronouns just like regular adjectives and tell us which one or how many. In the example sentence above, "The" is also an adjective; it tells us which librarian.

Here is another example:

> The dog barked at a woman on the street. ("The" tells us which dog, "a" tells us how many women, and the second "the" tells us which street.)

Tip

Some people are confused about when to use "the" and when to use "a" or "an." The answer depends on whether we are modifying a **specific** noun ("the dog" as in "that specific dog") or a **general** noun ("a woman" as in "any woman").

Placement

In English, adjectives usually come before

the noun or pronoun (Asian elephant, small table, long journey). But not always. For example:

> The organic farm has oranges that are ripe and juicy. ("The" and "organic" are adjectives that modify the noun "farm." But "ripe" and "juicy" are adjectives too; they modify the noun "oranges," even though they come after it.)

Changing Jobs

Sometimes nouns or pronouns modify another noun or pronoun, and when they do, they change jobs and work as adjectives. For example:

> dog's bed, Vicky's homework, their house, your decision

"dog's," "Vicky's," "their," and "your" answer the question "which one?" They look like nouns or pronouns, but they are working as adjectives.

Capitalizing Adjectives

When proper nouns work as adjectives, they are capitalized, just like they'd be capitalized if they were working as nouns. For example:

> Oregon → Oregon beer
>
> Jewish → Jewish synagogue
>
> Biden → Biden presidency

Graphics

Watch this cartoon video to reinforce what you've learned about adjectives:

Exercise 1

Go back to the sentences from Ch. 3.1.

You identified the nouns by highlighting them in yellow, the pronouns by highlighting them in orange, and the verbs by highlighting them in red. If you made any errors, correct them now.

Then, look at the nouns and pronouns you identified to see if any words modify them. Those will be adjectives. Highlight adjectives in light green.

Adverbs

Adverbs and adjectives do the same job: they modify other words. The difference is which types of words they modify. Adjectives modify only nouns and pronouns. **Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.**

Adverbs answer how, to what extent, why, when, and where. For example:

- Adverb modifying a verb: Bert sings horribly. ("horribly" modifies the verb "sings"; it tells how he sings.)
- Adverb modifying an adjective: Sarah was very nervous about the date. ("very" modifies the adjective "nervous"; it tells how much.)
- Adverb modifying another adverb: Students study really hard before finals. ("hard" is an adverb that modifies the verb "study"; it tells to what extent. But "really" is also an adverb; it modifies the adverb "hard"; it also tells to what extent.)

To find adjectives, we started by finding nouns and pronouns. So, to find adverbs, we must first find the verbs and adjectives in the sentence.

Placement

Unlike adjectives, which usually appear in front of the noun or pronoun they modify, adverbs can move. In the following sentences, the adverb "now" modifies the verb "have" by saying when, but it can appear in many locations:

> **Now** I have enough money for a vacation.
>
> I **now** have enough money for a vacation.
>
> I have enough money **now** for a vacation.

Adverbs can also appear in the middle of a verb phrase, but that doesn't mean they are part of the verb. They are still adverbs. For example:

> I do **not** have enough money for a vacation. ("not" is an adverb that modifies the verb "do have.")

Other adverbs that often interrupt verbs are "also" and "never."

Graphics

To reinforce what you've learned about adverbs, watch this cartoon video:

Exercise 2

Go back to the sentences from Ch. 3.1. You've already identified the nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Now, look for adverbs, and highlight them in dark green:

- First, see if any words modify the verbs you found. Those are adverbs. Highlight them in dark green.
- Then see if any words modify the adjectives you found. Those are also adverbs. Highlight them in dark green.
- Now, see if any words modify the adverbs you found in the previous two steps. Those are also adverbs. Highlight those adverbs in dark green.

There will still be a few words not highlighted, but not many.

Save this exercise for more work in Ch. 3.

Don't Confuse Adverbs and Adjectives

You may hear someone say, "Anthony is **real** smart" or "This pizza is **real** salty." That is incorrect grammar. The correct way to say those sentences is "Anthony is **really** smart" and "The pizza is **really** salty."

Why? Because "real" is an adjective and adjectives can't modify other adjectives, like "smart" or "salty." On the other hand, "really" is an adverb so it can modify an adjective.

People also have difficulty differentiating between "good" and "well" or "bad" and "badly." If you understand adjectives and adverbs, you will choose the correct word. For example:

> Cecilia is a good person. ("good" is an adjective that modifies the noun "person.")
>
> Cecilia did well on a test. ("well" is an adverb that modifies the verb "did.")
>
> I performed badly on my accounting test. ("badly" is an adverb that modifies the verb "performed.")
>
> The coming thunderstorm looked bad. ("bad" is an adjective that modifies the noun "thunderstorm.")

"Good" and "bad" are adjectives; they have to modify nouns or pronouns. "Well" and "badly" are adverbs.

Tip

A dictionary will tell you what part of speech a word is.

If the word can work as several parts of speech, a dictionary will tell you that too.

Takeaways

- Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.
- Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

3.5 Prepositions

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- the job of prepositions
- using prepositions to avoid common writing problems

The first five parts of speech we studied–nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs–are the foundation of a sentence. They tell us who is doing what.

The small dog is barking loudly.

But many sentences are more complex than simply who and what. We also want to know details about where and when.

The small dog ran **into the street**. (where)

The dog barks every day **at 7 a.m.** (when)

What Is a Preposition?

A preposition is a word that shows the position of something or someone in space and time.

If you look at the word "preposition," you'll see the embedded word "position." A preposition tells us where and when.

A prepositional **phrase** is a group of words that begins with a preposition, ends with a noun or pronoun, and does not include the verb or subject.

"into the street" is a prepositional phrase that shows where the dog ran. "at 7 a.m." is a prepositional phrase that tells us when it barks. Notice that both phrases begin with prepositions ("into," "at") and end with nouns ("street," "7 a.m."), and neither includes the subject or verb of the sentence.

Here is another example:

> The study rooms (on the first floor) (of the library) are full (in the morning).

In that sentence, each group of words enclosed in parentheses is a prepositional phrase: they all start with a preposition ("on," "of," "in"), end with a noun or pronoun ("floor," "library," "morning"), and don't include the verb ("are") or subject ("rooms"). The job of these prepositional phrases is to tell you **where** the study rooms are and **when** they are full.

Tip

When working with grammar, we identify prepositional phrases by enclosing them in parentheses.

Prepositions Show Position in Space

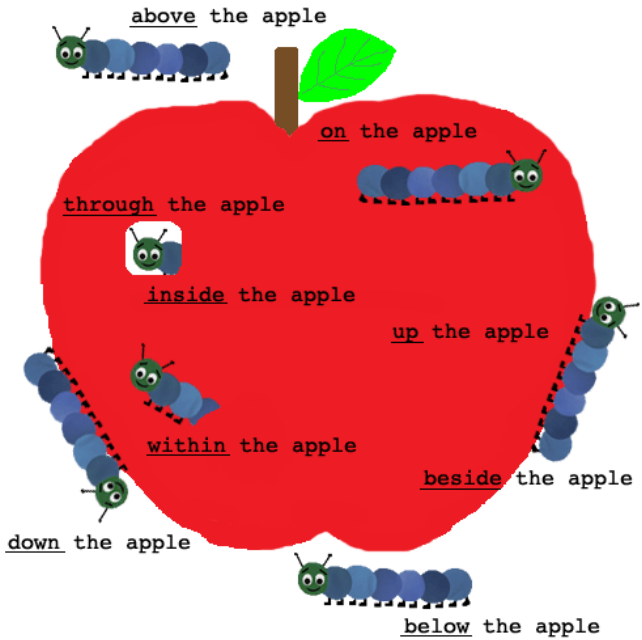
Here are some common prepositions that show positions in space:

to	across	over	against	with
at	through	inside	under	within
in	beyond	between	beneath	without
on	among	above	around	below
by	near	behind	past	from

Imagine a plane flying across a sky. We can change the plane's position in space by

changing the prepositions: above the clouds, below the clouds, within the clouds, between the clouds, past the clouds, behind the clouds.

Another way to remember prepositions about space is illustrated in this graphic. Where is the caterpillar in relation to the apple?



(This image reproduced with permission. © Elizabeth O'Brien, English-Grammar-Revolution.com)

Prepositions Show Position in Time

Here is a list of common prepositions that show position in time:

at	before	since
by	past	throughout
in	until	from
for	during	between

after within around

Imagine that plane is about to land. We can change its position in time by changing prepositions: at 3 p.m., after 3 p.m., before 3 p.m., around 3 p.m.

Of, As, and Like

The words "of," "as," and "like" are also prepositions, but they don't fit neatly into the space or time category. However, they are very common. For example:

> book of essays, type of bicycle, give as an example, testify as an expert, think like a computer, disappear like magic

Just remember: "of," "as" and "like" are also prepositions.

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences, then put parentheses before and after any prepositional phrases.

> For example: The cell phone rang (in the other room), but John didn't wake (from his nap).

Remember: Prepositional phrases always begin with a preposition and end with a noun or pronoun. They sometimes include adjectives or adverbs, but they never include verbs or subjects.

1. Meera was deeply interested in marine biology.
2. I just watched the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am happy for him.
4. The lawyer appeared before the court on Monday.
5. For the party, Chloe wore a comfortable blue tunic.

Why Bother?

Locating prepositional phrases will help you correct other parts of the sentence. For example:

> In the rainy season, one of our windows leaked at all four corners.

If we isolate the prepositional phrases from the rest of the sentence, it is easy to find the verb and subject:

> (In the rainy season), one (of our windows) leaked (at all four corners).

All we have left are the words "one" and "leaked." "one" is the pronoun subject and "leaked" is the verb.

Identifying prepositional phrases can help writers correct things like subject/verb agreement problems, sentence fragments, and other common grammatical errors. (More about subjects and verbs in Ch. 4.)

Graphics

To review prepositions, watch this cartoon video:

Exercise 2

Go back again to the sentences from Ch. 3.1.

You've already highlighted nouns in yellow, pronouns in orange, verbs in red, adjectives in light green, and adverbs in dark green. Double check to make sure your answers are all correct.

Now, look for prepositions. Highlight the preposition itself in blue and enclose each prepositional phrase in parentheses.

Save this exercise to complete in the remainder of Ch. 3.

Takeaways

- Prepositions show the placement in space or time of other elements in a sentence.
- Identifying prepositional phrases can help writers avoid other grammatical errors.

3.6 Conjunctions and Interjections

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- using conjunctions
- recognizing and avoiding interjections

We have studied six of the eight parts of speech. The last two are the easiest.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that connect. (Think what the word "junction" means: a place where things cross or connect.) Conjunctions connect two or more people, things, places, or ideas. They also can connect two or more parts of a sentence.

The most common conjunctions are "for," "and," "nor," "but," "or," "yet," and "so" (called "fanboys" after the first letter of each word). For example:

> The small bird flew swiftly towards the tree, **but** it nearly collided with a crow. It swerved at the last minute **and** landed safely. Neither the crow **nor** the small bird was hurt, **yet** both seemed upset.

Other conjunctions–such as "because," "since," "after," "as," "when," "while," and

"although"–can begin dependent clauses and connect them to the main part of the sentence. (More about clauses in Ch. 4.)

For example:

> The library **and** its landscaping impress people **when** they first visit our campus. ("and" joins "library" with "landscaping." Then "when" joins the main part of the sentence with the dependent clause at the end.)

Graphics

Watch this cartoon video for a fun way to review conjunctions:

Exercise 1

Find any conjunctions in the following sentences. List them.

1. Netta has a cheerful attitude while her husband is always gloomy.
2. Lydia is thoughtful and kind.
3. Dorian's math skills are good, although they are not as good as mine.
4. My handwriting is not worse than yours nor is it better.
5. Hilton went through drug rehab twice, but the second time seems to have worked.

Interjections

Interjections convey a greeting or show surprise or other emotions.

Interjections are common in spoken English but rare in written English because they are considered very casual. Interjections are like an emoticon (which also should be avoided in college and business writing). Interjections are usually followed by an exclamation point!

Here is a list of common interjections, but there are hundreds more:

blech	gak	ouch	wow
boo-yah	geez	rats	whoa
darn	ha	sweet	yikes
duh	huh	ugh	yippee
eek	oh	uh-oh	yuck

eww oops whoa yum

Graphics

Watch this fun cartoon video to review interjections:

Exercise 2

Go back to the sentences from Ch. 3.1 for a final time.

You have marked all the nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions using the appropriate highlight color. Double check to be sure your answers are correct.

Now, mark any conjunctions by highlighting them in pink and any interjections by highlighting them in gray.

If you have done this series of exercises correctly, every word will be identified by the job it is doing and the relationships between the words will be clear.

Submit this complete (and colorful) assignment.

Takeaways

- Conjunctions are helpful connectors.
- Interjections show emotion, but should be avoided in college and professional writing.

CHAPTER 4: SENTENCES

4.1 Basic Sentence Structure
4.2 Common Sentence Errors

4.1 Basic Sentence Structure

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- subjects, verbs, and objects
- phrases and clauses
- fragments

Writing is basically a system of structures. Words connect to form phrases, clauses and, eventually, sentences. Then, sentences connect to form paragraphs, and paragraphs connect to create essays, stories, letters, and reports.

Ch. 2 and Ch. 3 focused on words. This chapter looks at how we put words together into sentences.

Sentence Structure

A sentence is defined as a group of words that has a subject and a verb and express a complete thought. Some sentences are brief and others are complex, but those three criteria are the basic requirements for a sentence.

subject + verb + complete thought = sentence

The subject of the sentence is always a noun or a pronoun. It is who or what performs the action. The verb tells what happened to the subject or what state the subject is in. For example:

> Samantha sleeps. (The proper noun "Samantha" is performing the action so she is the subject of the sentence, and "sleeps" is the verb, the action she is performing.)

To find the subject of a sentence, first find all the nouns and pronouns. Then ask yourself which noun or pronoun is performing the action. For example:

> Samantha often sleeps on the sofa. (The nouns in that sentence are "Samantha" and "sofa." But which noun is performing the action? "Samantha" is sleeping, so "Samantha" is the subject.)

The subject is often at the beginning of the sentence, but sometimes it isn't. For example:

> After dinner, Alice served cake. (The nouns in that sentence are "dinner," "Alice," and "cake." But "Alice" is the subject and "served" is the verb; "After dinner" is a prepositional phrase that tells us when the action happened.)

Sometimes sentences have two subjects. For example:

> Alice and Juan walked to school. ("Alice" and "Juan" are the subjects; they both did the action. The word "and" isn't part of the subject; it is a conjunction that joins the two subjects.)

Sentences can also have more than one verb. For example:

> Samantha studies at her desk, sleeps on the couch, and drives to school. (Samantha does three things: "studies," "sleeps," and "drives." All three of those words are verbs.)

Exercise 1

Type the sentences below.

1. I have strong feelings about bullying.
2. Rachel and Jack dance competitively.
3. The patient was quickly admitted to the hospital.
4. Kim checked the condition of the track.
5. In August, Lily celebrated her birthday.

First, find all the nouns and pronouns. Then, figure out which noun or pronoun is the sentence subject. Underline subjects once.

What is the subject doing? That is the verb. Underline verbs twice.

For example: My neighbor's <u>flowers</u> usually bloom in April.

(It is easy to insert underlines and double underlines in Word. If you don't know how to do this, contact the computer tutor at the college.)

Remember that a sentence can have more than one subject and more than one verb.

For example: <u>Martie</u> and <u>Mitch</u> spend time in the garden every weekend.

Phrases and Clauses

Groups of words are called "phrases" or "clauses." (Remember that in Ch. 3 we studied one type of phrase: a **prepositional phrase**.)

A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a sentence subject or verb. For example:

- in the kitchen
- the long and winding road

A clause is a group of words that does contain a subject and verb. For example:

- Luisa cooked lasagna.
- the journey includes

There are two types of clauses:

- **Dependent clauses need further information to make a complete sentence.** For example: "the journey includes" has a subject and a verb but it does not express a complete thought. It is a dependent clause.
- **Independent clauses do not need additional information to stand on their own.** For example, "Luisa cooked lasagna" has a subject and a verb, and it expresses a complete thought. It is an independent clause. Another name for an independent clause is "a sentence."

Tip

Think of "dependent" as a child who relies on her parents for help. A dependent clause is not a sentence; it cannot survive alone.

A clause is "independent," like a child who moves out of the house and gets a job. It can stand on its own.

Building Longer Sentences

Obviously, most sentences are not as simple as a noun plus a verb: "Eugenio helped." But writers build on this basic structure.

One way sentences grow is by adding an "object."

subject + verb + object

The object of a sentence is the noun or pronoun affected by the action of the verb. In other words, the subject is the person or thing doing something; the object is having something done to it. For example:

> Alice baked a cake. ("Alice" is the subject; she is doing the action of baking. "baked" is the action being done by Alice; it is the verb. "cake" received the action of the verb; it is the object in this sentence.)

Adding prepositional phrases is another way to build more complex sentences. For example:

> Samantha is a good student who studies from 6 to 9 p.m. every day and often she will fall asleep on the sofa with a book in her lap.

"from 6 to 9 p.m.," "on the sofa," "with a book" and "in her lap" are all prepositional phrases; they add information about where and when to the sentence.

Experienced writers often write complex sentences, but a sentence is not good just because it is long. It is important not to overload sentences. For example:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

If a sentence is cluttered, divide it into two shorter sentences:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Dissecting a sentence is like dissecting a frog in science class. We are opening it up and looking at the parts, giving each part a name and figuring out how the parts work together, with the goal of understanding how the frog works. Digging into the anatomy of language can be as interesting as when other people dig into the anatomy of a political movement, or a car engine, or a piece of music.

Avoiding Fragments

One of the benefits to understanding sentence structure is the ability to identify fragments. It is easier to avoid fragments if you know how a sentence is built.

Remember that a complete sentence requires three things: a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. "Samantha sleeps," fulfills those requirements. It has a subject "Samantha," a verb "sleeps," and it expresses a complete thought. Even though it is short, it is a complete sentence.

A fragment is an incomplete sentence.

It may be missing a subject. For example:

> Went to the movies last weekend. (Who went to the movies? The subject is missing.)

Or a fragment may be missing a verb. For example:

> The statue damaged during the riots. ("damaged" is not a verb; it's an adjective that describes the noun "statue." Without a verb, this is a fragment.)

Or a fragment may have both a subject and a verb, but not express a complete thought. For example:

> If she feels like going. (This has a subject "she" and a verb "feels." But the point is unfinished.)

To fix fragments, add what is missing. For example:

- "Went to the movies last weekend" + subject = **Massimo** went to the movies last weekend.
- "The statue damaged during the riots" + verb = The statue damaged during the riots **was** a symbol of racism.
- "If she feels like going" + complete thought = If she feels like going**, let her**.

Exercise 2

Type up the sentences below, adding missing information to any fragments so the sentence is complete. If a sentence is complete already, write "Complete."

Don't guess. Look for subjects and verbs, then make sure the sentence expresses a complete thought.

1. The band arrived in a limo with their guitars in the trunk.
2. Entered the office and took off his coat.
3. A kite shaped like a raven.
4. In the park, I saw a homeless family.
5. My password for the library website.
6. Bentley, the next door neighbor, likes.
7. Blew down in the high wind, but the maple tree was unharmed.

Takeaways

- A sentence is a group of words with a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.
- Groups of words are called phrases or clauses. There are two types of clauses: dependent and independent.
- Adding prepositional phrases and objects makes a sentence more complex.
- Understanding how a sentence is constructed will help you avoid errors such as fragments.

4.2 Common Sentence Errors

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- subject-verb agreement
- misplaced and dangling modifiers
- parallel structure

Writing mistakes make a negative impression on a reader (and on a grade). Three common sentence errors are subjects and verbs that don't agree, modifier problems, and lack of parallel structure. By understanding parts of speech and sentence structure, these three errors can be avoided.

Subject-Verb Agreement

"Subject-verb agreement" means the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree. A singular subject belongs with a singular verb, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb. For example:

> Singular: The cat jumps over the fence.
> Plural: The cats jump over the fence.

Errors in subject-verb agreement are common, especially when the subject of the sentence is separated from the verb by other words. One way to avoid that problem is to cross out prepositional phrases and dependent clauses so it is easier to see

the subjects and verbs. Subjects and verbs never appear in a prepositional phrase or a dependent clause.

For example, the prepositional phrases have been crossed out here:

> The students ~~with the best grades~~ win the academic awards.
> The puppy ~~under the table~~ is my favorite.

That makes it easy to identify the subjects ("students," "puppy") and the verbs ("win," "is").

Dependent clauses that separate the subject and verb have been crossed out here:

> The car ~~that I bought~~ has power steering and a sunroof.
> The representatives ~~who are courteous~~ sell the most tickets.

That makes it easier to see the subjects ("car," "representatives") and the verbs ("has," "sell"). And it makes it very easy to see that the subjects and verbs agree.

Exercise 1

Type the sentences below, correcting any errors in subject-verb agreement.

(Note: If you identify prepositional phrases and dependent clauses first, it is easier to find subjects and verbs because they never appear in prepositional phrases or dependent clauses.)

1. My sister and brother fights during every meal.
2. The books in the college library is easy to locate.
3. Our renters cleans up after themselves.
4. Some of the holiday decorations is packed away in the attic.
5. Squirrels in my attic and basement annoys me.

Modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers. Phrases and clauses can also work as modifiers. Modifiers make writing more interesting, but also more complicated so more prone to errors.

Two common modifier errors are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. When these errors occur, readers become confused trying to figure out what the writer meant.

A misplaced modifier is too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make a sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally funny. For example:

She wore a bicycle helmet on her head that was too large.

This seems to say her head was too large. The modifying phrase "that was too large" should be closer to the word it is modifying: "helmet." The modifier is misplaced.

Corrected: She wore a bicycle helmet that was too large on her head.

Here is another example:

The patient was referred to a physician with stomach pains.

Does the doctor have stomach pains? The modifier "with stomach pains" is too far from the word "patient."

Corrected: The patient with stomach pains was referred to a physician.

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that isn't in the sentence. When there is nothing to modify, the modifier is said to "dangle." For example:

Riding in the sports car, the world seemed to whiz by rapidly.

Who is riding in the sports car? The modifier "riding in the sports car" is dangling.

Corrected: When Farzad was riding in the sports car, the world seemed to whiz by rapidly.

Here is another example:

Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Who is walking? Not the trees! The modifier "walking home at night" is dangling.

Corrected: As Sarah was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Exercise 2

Type up the following sentences, moving or adding information to correct misplaced or dangling modifiers.

1. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.
2. The young woman was walking her dog on the telephone.
3. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a mystery novel.
4. I heard there was a fire on the evening news.
5. We are looking for a sitter for our baby who doesn't smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served snacks to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. Lily spotted a stray dog driving home from work.
8. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.

Parallel Structure

When something is parallel to something else, they are similar in form. For example, two parallel lines look like this:

Parallelism in writing is the use of a similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. For example, these three phrases have parallel structure:

in the pool, in the forest, in the book

They feel balanced. Also, they are easy to read and remember.

Now look at these word groups:

> in the pool, forests are green, book shelf

They are different in structure. Notice how jagged it feels to read them, and they are more difficult to remember.

Parallel structure creates rhythm and balance in a sentence. An unbalanced sentence sounds awkward. Read the following sentences aloud:

> Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.
>
> Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.
>
> Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than a pool.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. The construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used ("had to," "do," "shopping"). In the second example, the writer begins with nouns ("coordination," "patience"), but ends with a phrase ("to have good eyesight"). In the third sentence, the writer is comparing an action ("swimming") with a thing ("a pool").

Here are the same sentences with correct parallel structure:

> Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived. (The verbs have the same structure.)
>
> Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight. (The three qualities are all written as nouns.)
>
> Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than swimming in a pool. (One action is being compared with another action.)

When sentences use parallel structure, they sound more pleasing. Repetition of the pattern also minimizes the work a reader has to do to understand the sentence.

Exercise 3

Type up the following sentences, making any necessary changes to correct parallel structure problems. Don't guess; refer to the information above so that your answer is correct.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. Indian cuisine is tastier than the food of Great Britain.
4. Jim's opponent in the ring was taller, carried more weight, and not as strong.
5. Working for a living is much harder than school.

An Example of Parallel Structure

Some of the most beautiful pieces of writing and many great historical speeches use parallel structure to emphasize important points and create a smooth, easily understandable idea.

For example, here is a paragraph from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech:

> But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the

> corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

Not only does King repeat the phrase "One hundred years later" to drill that fact into the listeners' memories, but he also uses more subtle parallel structure in "the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." These phrases are similar in structure (article + plural noun + preposition + noun), and the words within each part are similar in form ("manacles" and "chains," "segregation" and "discrimination").

Great writers and speakers are aware of the power of parallel structure.

Takeaways

- A verb must always agree with its subject. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb, even when the subject and verb are separated.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Parallelism creates rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure. Faulty parallelism makes a sentence clunky and awkward.

CHAPTER 5: PUNCTUATION

5.1 End Punctuation
5.2 Commas
5.3 Apostrophes
5.4 Quotation Marks, Italics, Underlining
5.5 Semicolons, Colons, Hyphens, Dashes, Parentheses, Ellipses, Slashes

5.1 End Punctuation

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- the role of punctuation
- end punctuation: periods, question marks, exclamation points

Punctuation is nothing more than a code that tells the reader how a sentence should be said. For example, a question mark at the end of a sentence means your voice goes up at the end. A period means your voice goes down at the end. Say these sentences aloud:

> What is your name?
>
> My name is Laura.

Hear the difference? If you use punctuation correctly, readers will "hear" your words correctly.

Incorrect punctuation sends incorrect information to the reader. Sometimes the result is confusing or even silly. For example:

> With a comma: Let's eat, Mother. (This is telling your mother it's dinner time.)
>
> Without a comma: Let's eat Mother. (This is suggesting that Mother be the main course.)

Chapter 5 provides basic information about punctuation. We'll begin at the end.

End Punctuation

Only three types of punctuation are used at the end of English sentences:

- periods
- question marks
- exclamation points

The Period.

A period goes at the end of a complete sentence that makes a statement or a mild command. Most sentences end in a period. For example:

> Heavy rain caused delays on I-5. (statement)
>
> Take a different route to avoid traffic congestion. (mild command)

Periods are also used one other way: after an abbreviation. For example:

Jan. (for January)	Mr. (for Mister)
ft. (for feet)	abbr. (for abbreviation)
Ave. (for Avenue)	Pres. (for President)
Tues. (for Tuesday)	Ch. (for chapter)

Note: An abbreviation is a shortening of a word, like "ft." for "feet." An acronym is a new word created from the initials of a longer phrase, like "AIDS" for "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome." Texting shorthand, such as "OMG" and "LOL," are acronyms, not abbreviations. Acronyms do not need periods. Abbreviations do.

The Question Mark?

The second most common end punctuation is a question mark. It is used after

direct questions, but not after indirect questions. A direct question is asking for an answer. An indirect question is not. For example:

> Has online enrollment begun? (direct question)
>
> I wonder if online enrollment has begun. (indirect question)

The Exclamation Point!

An exclamation point is used after an expression that conveys strong emotions or loud sounds. For example:

> I need a break from this job!
>
> Ouch! That hurts!

Exclamations are casual and rarely used in college or business writing.

Exercise 1

Type the sentences below, adding end punctuation. (Existing punctuation and capitalization are correct.)

1. Christine brought soup and homemade bread to her elderly neighbor
2. Will Lily be on time
3. Mom always says my sister has her own agenda
4. I have to clean my room before my parents get back
5. Rats I didn't get into the class I wanted
6. The good news is they are offering a discount for senior citizens

The key to end punctuation is to remember to use it! Because many people text

or send messages these days, they often forget to use punctuation in more formal situations, like school or the workplace, where it matters.

Takeaways

- The three types of end punctuation in English are periods, question marks, and exclamation points.
- The content of the sentence determines which punctuation to put at the end.
- Remembering to actually use end punctuation is the biggest challenge.

5.2 Commas

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- basic comma rules
- run-on sentences/comma splices

Commas are the most frequently used punctuation mark, and they are also the most common punctuation error.

Like other punctuation, the job of a comma is to help the reader understand how something would be said. The word "comma" comes from the Greek word meaning "to cut off." The message commas send is this: pause here, just for a second.

Try to read the following sentence:

> I have three pigs four cats with six toes a gerbil named Hammy an old spotted cow who still gives milk and an Irish wolfhound named Vanessa.

You don't know where to pause; you struggle to break the information into understandable chunks. Now read this:

> I have three pigs, four cats with six toes, a gerbil named Hammy, an old spotted cow who still gives milk, and an Irish wolfhound named Vanessa.

Commas help us translate words on the page into meaning. Incorrect comma use makes the reader's job much harder. For example, look at these two sentences:

I love my parents, Beyonce and Barack Obama.

I love my parents, Beyonce, and Barack Obama.

The only difference is a comma. If you put a comma after "Beyonce," the sentence says you love four people. Without that comma, the sentence says that your parents **are** Beyonce and Barak Obama!

It's the writer's responsibility to use commas correctly, not the reader's responsibility to figure out what the writer meant.

Basic Comma Rules

- **Commas have two jobs: they either separate or they enclose.** Remember that, and you are halfway there.
- **There are seven main rules for comma use.** Understanding these seven rules will eliminate nearly all of the comma errors in your writing.

Commas That Separate

Rule 1: Use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by the conjunctions known as "fanboys." (If you need a refresher on conjunctions and "fanboys," go back to Ch. 3.6.)

For example:

- We brought chips to the party, and our neighbors were appreciative. ("We brought chips to the party" is an independent clause–it has a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. "our neighbors were appreciative" is also an independent clause. The two independent clauses are joined by the conjunction "and," so we put a comma in front of "and.")

- My geology textbook is expensive, so I'll find a used copy. ("My geology textbook is expensive" is an independent clause. "I'll find a used copy" is also an independent clause. The two independent clauses are joined by "so." Put a comma in front of "so.")

Tip

This first comma rule is the most difficult. Master it and the others will seem easy!

Caution: Be sure the conjunction connects two independent clauses, not just two words or two phrases or even two dependent clauses. For example:

> My dog curled up on the sofa and waited for dinner. ("and" joins the verbs "curled" and "waited." The phrase "waited for dinner" is not an independent clause. No comma before "and.")

This rule clarifies a term you have probably heard: **comma splice**. If we put a comma between independent clauses that are NOT joined by "fanboys," that is a "comma splice." The comma is splicing, or cutting, the sentence in two parts. A comma splice is a comma error.

Here is a comma splice:

> Dogs are people's best friends, people are a cat's best friend.

To fix this error, add one of the "fanboys":

> Dogs are people's best friends, **but** people are a cat's best friend.

Understanding how a comma splice works has the added benefit of explaining what a run-on sentence is. A run-on sentence is two or more independent clauses connected improperly. For example:

> I love to eat ice cream I would eat it every day if I could.

That run-on can be fixed by adding a comma and the conjunction "and" after "ice cream," or by putting a period after "ice cream" and making two sentences.

Exercise 1

Turn the sentence pairs below into a single sentence by adding a separating comma and a "fanboys" conjunction.

1. Ellen wanted a book to read at bedtime. She checked her bookcase.
2. We could go to Paris for vacation. We could go to the beach instead.
3. I want a college education. I want to start a career.
4. Sarah needs a different job. She has started interviewing.
5. The weather is getting colder. We decided to stay home.

Rule 2: Use commas to separate items in a series, date, or address. This comma allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in a group.

For example:

- We need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store. (Separate items in a list with commas. Note: Writers sometimes leave out the comma before the conjunction if the meaning is clear. That is called an "Oxford comma" because it is the standard for writers at Oxford University.)
- Mr. Schaeffer could see a wild, dangerous, overgrown jungle in his neighbor's yard. (Use commas between a series of adjectives that modify a noun.)
- My grandfather was born on August 13, 1897, in Alameda County. (In a date, put a comma between the day and the year. If the sentence continues on,

put a comma after the year. When only the month and year are used, no comma is needed. For example: He was born in August 1897.)

- My best friend's address is 2600 Trillium Avenue, Mill Creek, Washington 97202, and she visits me often. (Put a comma after the street and after the city, but not between the state and the zip code. If you continue the sentence after the address, add a comma after the address.)

Rule 3: Use a comma to separate an introductory word or phrase from the beginning of the main sentence.

For example:

- Finally, he received an Oscar for his work in film. (introductory word)
- During last season, our team won nearly every game. (introductory phrase)

Rule 4: Use a comma to separate a tag question, contrast, comment, or description from the end of the main sentence. (A "tag" is an afterthought.)

For example:

- The age restriction goes into effect in March, doesn't it? (tag question)
- Students who earn high grades are those who study, not those who cheat. (tag contrast)
- She said she would "consider my application," whatever that means. (tag comment)
- We spent a month in Italy, visiting family. (tag description)

Most prepositional phrases and dependent clauses at the end of sentences are not tags and do not require commas. For example:

> The word "ruminate" means to think about something. ("about something" is a prepositional phrase, not a tag. No comma.)

Exercise 2

Type these sentences, adding commas where necessary to **separate**.

1. Her holiday card was postmarked December 7 2020 but I didn't receive it until January.
2. I recently moved from my dorm to an apartment at 2055 High Street Eugene Oregon 97401.
3. In a flash the barista had Chris's latte on the counter.
4. Confused but persistent Sarah tried opening the door with a different key.
5. I prefer hot chocolate to coffee or tea don't you?
6. The best dogs are loyal and sweet not necessarily well behaved.

Commas That Enclose

Rule 5: Commas are used to enclose (placed before and after) the name of a person being spoken to in a sentence.

For example:

> Did you know, Sophia, that you left your book in class?

Rule 6: Commas are used to enclose transitions or expressions that interrupt the flow of the sentence.

For example:

> I know, by the way, that my paper is late.
>
> I will try, therefore, to be on time in the future.

If you are unsure whether an expression is interrupting, say it aloud. You can hear the pause before and after "by the way" in the first sentence.

Tip

When people start studying commas, they tend to insert them everywhere. Don't put a comma in a sentence unless you can explain the rule for doing so.

Rule 7: Use commas to enclose extra or unnecessary information in the middle of a sentence.

For example:

> Max O'Keefe, who organized the event, will introduce the speakers.

But be sure the information is unnecessary:

> The person who organized the event will introduce the speakers. (We don't know which person without the phrase "who organized the event." No commas.)

Exercise 3

Type these short paragraphs, inserting commas where necessary.

At the end of each sentence, write the number of the rule you used.

1. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. To prepare for the meeting please print any e-mails faxes or documents referred to in your report.
2. The leader of the group Garth kept checking their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie carried the equipment. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain.
3. Please submit your application to Roger by April 15 2020. In your cover letter include contact information the position for which you are applying and two references. We will not be available for questions after April 10 but you may contact the office before then.

Takeaways

- Commas separate or enclose units in a sentence.
- Never use a comma unless you know which rule you are following.

5.3 Apostrophes

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- apostrophes in possessives
- apostrophes in contractions
- commonly confused words

The only punctuation mark that causes more problems than the apostrophe is the comma, and that's just because it is used more often. Be the first person on your block to know how to use an apostrophe correctly! It's not that hard!

An apostrophe looks like a comma floating in the air: **'** .

Sometimes people see the letter "s" and stick an apostrophe next to it. Don't do that. Correct apostrophe use is important because errors change meaning. For example:

> **Mary's** refers to something Mary has.
>
> **Marys** refers to more than one person named Mary.
>
> **Marys'** refers to more than one person named Mary and they both have something.

There are only two places where an apostrophe is needed:

- with a noun, to show possession: Mary's cat, the neighbor's garage sale

- in a contraction, to indicate where letters or numbers have been left out: didn't, '80s.

Possessives

To possess something is to own it. Words that show possession are called "possessives." We use apostrophes to show possession.

To know where to put the apostrophe and whether or not to add an "s," start by asking the question "Who or what does the possessing?"

- If the answer is a word that ends in a letter other than an "s," add an apostrophe and an "s." For example: the children's toys, the doctor's visit
- If the word already ends in an "s" (for example, most plurals), add an apostrophe after the existing "s." For example: two birds' nest, the girls' bicycles
- Occasionally, a word that ends in "s" needs another sound to make the possessive clear. For example: Texas's border, the dress's color, my boss's instructions. Say the word aloud. If it needs another sound, you'll hear it. Add the apostrophe and another "s."

Pronouns such as our, ours, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs, and whose are already possessive and do not need apostrophes. For example:

- their house
- her dog
- our religion

Contractions

To "contract" means to decrease in size. When two words are shortened into one by removing letters and squeezing the words together, an apostrophe is added where the letters were removed. For example:

> is not → isn't (the apostrophe goes where the "o" was)
>
> you have → you've (the apostrophe goes where "ha" was)

Here are some common contractions:

Tip

Contractions are common in informal writing and speech, but because they are considered casual, they are often avoided in academic and business writing.

These words → become these contractions	
are not → aren't	should not → shouldn't
cannot → can't	that is → that's
could have → could've	there is, there has → there's
could not → couldn't	they will → they'll
does not → doesn't	they are → they're
do not → don't	they have → they've
have not → haven't	we will, we shall → we'll
he will → he'll	we are → we're
he is, he has → he's	we have → we've
I would → I'd	were not → weren't
I will → I'll	what is → what's
I am → I'm	where is → where's
I have → I've	who is, who has → who's
is not → isn't	would have → would've
it is, it has → it's	would not → wouldn't

These words → become these contractions	
let us → let's	you will → you'll
she will → she'll	you are → you're
she is, she has → she's	you have → you've
should have → should've	

One exception: When making a contraction of "will not," the pattern of just removing letters doesn't hold true:

> will not → won't

In all other contractions, the apostrophe goes exactly where the letter or letters were removed.

Number Contractions

We also sometimes "contract" numbers. The rule is the same: put an apostrophe where the numbers have been removed. For example:

> He grew up in the '90s. (put the apostrophe where 19 was removed)

However, if the number is simply a plural, not a contraction, do not add an apostrophe.

> The temperature is going to be in the low 40s.

Do NOT put an apostrophe between the number and the "s." These are contractions, not possessives.

Commonly Confused Words

People often confuse these words:

- "its" (a possessive pronoun, as in "its paw") and "it's" (a contraction of "it is" or "it has")
- "whose" (a possessive pronoun) and "who's" (a contraction of "who is" or

"who has")

- "your" (the possessive pronoun, as in "your book") and "you're" (a contraction of "you are")

Here's a trick: If you can turn a contraction back into two words and the sentence makes sense, then it's a contraction and needs an apostrophe. For example:

> The cat licked its paw. (You would not say "The cat licked it is paw," so "its" is a possessive pronoun, not a contraction. No apostrophe.)
>
> Who's going to the party? (You could say "Who is going" so this is a contraction and needs an apostrophe.)
>
> The doctor said you're to take the prescription. (You would say "You are" so this is a contraction and needs an apostrophe.)

Notice that possessives work as adjectives and modify nouns. For example:

> Mary's mother
>
> our friends' arrival (This is a plural. Several friends have arrived. If only one friend arrived, it would be "our friend's arrival.")
>
> the Jones's address
>
> their counselor's office
>
> a person's clothes (singular)
>
> people's clothes (plural, but "people" doesn't end in "s")

Tip

Don't put an apostrophe wherever you see an "s." A lot of words end in "s." Always ask if the word is showing possession or if it is a contraction.

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences, adding apostrophes where needed. Don't guess. Refer to the rules above so that your answers are correct.

1. Colin was a hippie in the 60s.
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. Its my parents house, but its my bedroom.
4. I couldnt believe that I got the job!
5. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the day off.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?
7. Sarahs job just disappeared due to the pandemic.
8. Texass state flower is a bluebonnet, not a yellow rose.

Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where letters or numbers have been removed.
- Do not use apostrophes to indicate a plural.

5.4 Quotation Marks, Italics, and Underlining

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- using quotation marks
- using italics
- **not** using underlining

What do quotation marks, italics, and underlining look like?

- Quotation marks look like little pairs of commas up in the air (“ ”). They always come in a set: one before and one after whatever is being enclosed. For example: “The Lottery” is a very scary story.
- Italics is a typeface, not a symbol. It is a design that tilts the tops of letters to the right and makes them look fancy, like this: *italics.* (The name comes from the fact that the first typefaces designed to look like handwriting came from Italy.)
- Underlining is obvious: <u>underlining</u>.

How do you use these marks? First, stop using underlining. The only thing underlined in a document these days is a link to something online. (One exception: If you are writing by hand, you can use underlining on something you would normally italicize.)

So all you really need to know is how to use quotation marks and italics.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (“ ”) enclose words to set them off from the rest of the text. Quotation marks are used three ways:

- to identify certain types of titles
- to indicate another person’s words, whether written or spoken
- to refer to a word being used as a word (For example: The word “cat” has three letters. Putting “cat” in quotes clarifies that we are referring to the word, not the animal. If we were just talking about the animal, we would not use quotes. For example: I had a cat named Maggie. This use of quotation marks is rare. Focus on the first two uses, which are much more common.)

Titles in Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to identify the titles of short works such as poems, essays, articles, chapters, songs, stories, web pages, TV and radio episodes–anything short enough that is part of something larger like a book, CD, program, or website. For example:

> “Looking for America” by Lana Del Rey (song)
>
> “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell (essay)
>
> “A Real Durwan” by Jhumpa Lahiri (short story)
>
> “Watering the Stones” by Mary Oliver (poem)
>
> “The Rains of Castamere” (episode in a TV series)
>
> “Blood Gold: The Fight for the Future of Brazil’s Rain Forest” (magazine article)
>
> “Take Action” (page on Cascade AIDS Project’s website)

For the titles of longer works, see “Italics” below.

Quoting Speech

In college, you will write lots of research papers, using the ideas and the words of other people. The first step is understanding the difference between direct and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation is when you write exactly what someone else said or wrote. Their words are enclosed in quotation marks. For example:

> The wolf said, "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down."
>
> According to Gandhi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote but using your own words. Do not use quotation marks for indirect quotations. For example:

> The wolf threatened to destroy the little pig's house.
>
> Gandhi often said we have to take action if we want the world to be better.

Tip

Whether you quote research directly or indirectly, it must always be identified as research!

Capitalizing Quotes

Quotes are capitalized just like regular sentences. The first word in a sentence is capitalized and the first word in a quote is capitalized.

> Martie wrote an email saying, "Thank you for the card. The design was lovely." (The words "Thank" and "The" are capitalized because they begin sentences.)

When identifying the speaker in the middle of a quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized unless it is the beginning of a new sentence. For example:

> "Thank you for the card," Martie wrote in her email. "The design was lovely." ("The" is capitalized because it is the beginning of the new sentence.)

> "Thank you for the card," Martie wrote, adding, "with the lovely design." (The word "with" is not capitalized because the phrase "with the lovely design" is a continuation of the sentence that begins "Thank you for the card.")

Placement of Quotation Marks

Quotation marks go at the beginning and the end of the quote. This is true even if a quote goes on for two or more sentences. Generally, no additional quotation marks are needed in between. For example:

> My sister said, "Your dog ran away again. I found him, but he was wet and muddy. The next time he runs away, get him yourself."

However, if the quote is interrupted with explanatory words, the quotation marks go around the quoted words to separate them from the explanation. For example:

> My sister said, "Your dog ran away again." I could tell she was really angry. "I found him, but he was wet and muddy," she continued. "The next time he runs away, get him yourself." Then she slammed the door.

A speaker can be identified at the beginning, middle, or end of a quote. For example:

> Madison said, "Let's stop at the market to buy fresh vegetables for dinner."

> "Let's stop at the market," Madison said. "We can buy fresh vegetables for dinner."

> "Let's stop at the market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner," Madison said.

When quotation marks are used next to other punctuation, there is a correct order.

- **Quotation marks are always placed after commas and periods.** For example:

  I love the Billie Eilish song "My Future," which she sang at the Democratic convention.

- **If both the sentence and the quote are statements, put the period inside the end quotes.** For example:

  In high school I read "The Lottery."

- **If the sentence is a question or exclamation and the quote is a statement, put the question mark or exclamation point after the end quotes.** For example:

  I finally memorized the poem "The Raven"!

- **But if the sentence is a statement and the quoted material is a question or exclamation, put the question mark or exclamation point inside the end quotes.** For example:

  I asked the teacher, "Can you help me?"

Single quotation marks (' ') are only used to indicate a quotation within another quotation. For example:

> Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the music festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed,' so I took Pepper home."

Using quotation marks correctly requires practice. Keep these rules nearby and check them when you want to use quotation marks.

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences, adding quotation marks where necessary. Check the rules above as you work.

1. Yasmin said, Let's go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? asked Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.
4. I know, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar. Did you know that the name is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
5. Yasmin was surprised and asked the poem's title.
6. The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost, Russell explained.
7. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
8. Russell nodded in agreement.

Italics

Use italics to identify titles of long works (books, plays, newspapers, magazines, albums and CDs, websites, movies and DVDs, TV and radio series), as well as the names of ships and aircraft, and foreign words. For example:

Books and plays: *To Kill a Mockingbird, Hamlet, The Hobbit*

Magazines and newspapers: *The New York Times, Rolling Stone*

Movies and DVDs: *Casablanca, Moonlight, Vivo*

Websites: *Craig's List, Common Sense Media, Khan Academy, TED*

TV & radio series: *Stranger Things, SNL, Morning Edition*

Albums and CDs: *Abbey Road* by The Beatles, *American Idiot* by Green Day

Video games: *Super Mario 3D World, Minecraft*

Ships and aircraft: *Enterprise, Spruce Goose*

Foreign words: The Italian word *ciao* is used when greeting people or saying goodbye.

Tip

Use quotation marks for the titles of small things that are part of something larger.

Use italics for the titles of large things.

Never use both quotation marks and italics. It's always one or the other.

Exercise 2

Type up the following list, putting the titles either in quotes or italics. (If you are unfamiliar with something on the list, Google it. You can't punctuate correctly if you don't know what the thing is.)

- Queen Mary 2
- The Washington Post
- BBC News
- Breaking Bad
- Pulp Fiction
- The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- The New Yorker
- The Raven by Edgar Allen Poe
- aloha
- Bigger Love by John Legend
- Wikipedia
- Netflix
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Notice that whether you put a title in quotes or italics gives your reader information.

Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and the titles of short works.
- Use italics for the titles of long works and foreign words.
- Don't use underlining for anything other than live links.
- Never use both italics and quotes; it's always one or the other.

5.5 Semicolons, Colons, Hyphens, Dashes, Parentheses, Ellipses, and Slashes

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- using semicolons, colons, hyphens, dashes, parentheses, ellipses, and slashes
- where the most study is needed

Why lump all the remaining punctuation marks into one section? Because none of them are used very often. In fact, you could probably make it through college without using any of these punctuation marks more than a few times.

Your focus should be on the first four sections of this chapter: end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, and quotes/italics. Those are very commonly used and frequently misused. If you learn how to use those correctly, you are 99% of the way to mastery over punctuation.

However, there are other punctuation marks. So let's work through them.

Semicolon;

The semicolon looks like a period sitting on top of a comma. It indicates a pause in the sentence. What it looks like can help you remember that the length of the pause: longer than a comma but less than a period.

Use a semicolon between two independent clauses that are not joined by one of the conjunctions called "fanboys." For example:

> My brother is an insurance salesman; we have great coverage.

Also, use a semicolon as sort of a "super comma" to avoid confusion in a list that already has commas. For example:

> I enjoy gardening, my hobby; dancing, my passion; and writing, my job.
>
> The color combinations we can choose are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Tip

A semicolon has absolutely nothing to do with a colon. Don't confuse the two.

You can write all your life and never need a semicolon. A comma or a period will usually work instead. Avoid semicolons unless you have a really good reason, and then be sure to use them correctly.

Colon:

The colon looks like a period sitting on top of another period.

A colon is used after an independent clause to direct a reader's attention to something that follows, like a list, a quote, an example, or an explanation. For example:

> The college website introduced the new dean: Sara Rivara.
>
> The Toyota Prius comes in four colors: red, orange, blue, or black.
>
> Mark Twain said it best: "When in doubt, tell the truth."

However, if the introductory clause is dependent, generally we don't use a colon. For example:

> The Toyata Prius comes in red, blue, orange, and black.

Tip

In this textbook, a colon is used after "For example" to direct attention to the examples that follow. "For example" is not an independent clause, but this kind of exception is common in business writing.

The first letter following a colon is capitalized only if the word is a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the beginning of a sentence. Otherwise, do not capitalize the word that follows a colon.

Exercise 1

Type up the following sentences, adding semicolons or colons where needed. To do this assignment correctly, you must know how these two punctuation marks are different.

1. There are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.
2. I did not notice that you were in the office I was at the front desk all day.
3. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
4. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
5. Next semester, we will read contemporary authors Zadie Smith, Emma Donoghue and Tea Obreht.

Hyphen-

The hyphen is a short line, like a minus sign. It is used in four ways:

- Compound words. A compound word is when two or more words are joined to form a new word. A dictionary will tell you whether a compound word needs a hyphen (as in "water-repellant"), or is written as one word (as in "waterproof"), or is two words (as in "water table").
- Words working together as an adjective. When two or more words work together to modify a noun or pronoun, they are connected by a hyphen. For example: "well-known candidate," "four-year-old child."
- Numbers. Hyphenate the written form of fractions and compound numbers, such as "three-fourths" and "twenty-one."

- Word breaks. Use a hyphen to divide a word onto two lines. Many word processing programs will do this for you, but if you have to do it yourself, put the hyphen between syllable breaks. (A dictionary will tell you where a word can be divided.)

Dash–

A dash is a long line between words, used to set off a phrase for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes or just use one dash to set off a phrase from the beginning or the end of the sentence. For example:

> I love movies about other countries–such as *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Roma*.
>
> The new students–Oliver, Diego, and Natasha–still need to buy their textbooks.

Unless you have a good reason for using a dash, avoid it. Using dashes creates a choppy feel and generally other punctuation marks work equally well. For example, commas could replace the dashes in the two sentences above.

Tip

To create a dash, type two hyphens. In Word, if you don't put any spaces before or after the hyphens and hit the space bar after the next word, the two hyphens should turn into a single long line.

Exercise 2

Type up the following sentences, adding dashes or hyphens where necessary.

1. Which hair length do you prefer short or long?
2. My favorite is shoulder length hair.
3. Marta is taking care of her six month old nephew this weekend.
4. My homework is three fourths done.
5. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.

(Parentheses)

Parentheses come in pairs and are placed before and after information that is secondary or supplemental to the main sentence (such as an afterthought). Notice parentheses curve around the word or words. For example:

> Hospital nurses record a patient's vital signs (temperature, pulse, blood pressure) every few hours.
>
> *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* has to be the worst movie I've seen (so far).

To check if parentheses are needed, the sentence should still make sense if the information in the parentheses is deleted.

> Hospital nurses record a patient's vital signs every few hours.
>
> *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* has to be the worst movie I've seen.

Tip

You will never put the subject or verb of a sentence in parentheses because they are never secondary information.

Parentheses are also used to enclose an abbreviation that follows the full-length word. The abbreviation is then used throughout the rest of the text. For example:

> I attend Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC). When I first registered at MHCC, I was a bit nervous.

And parentheses are used to enclose in-text citations in research papers (more about this next term).

Exercise 3

Type up the following sentences, adding parentheses where necessary. If the sentence is already clear, write "Correct."

1. I recommend you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
2. I was able to solve the puzzle although I had to think carefully.
3. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
4. Has anyone in the class read the assignment?
5. Be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Remember to ask yourself if the information makes sense without the words enclosed in parentheses.

Ellipses...

An ellipsis looks like three periods in a row. It indicates that something has been deleted from an otherwise word-for-word quotation. For example:

> According to the review, the new book was "an important contribution to gender studies...in the 21st century."

This tells us there were additional words between "studies" and "in" in the original quote, but they have been deleted as not relevant to this situation. You can't just take the words out of a quote; you have to show you are doing so.

Ellipses are not usually necessary at the beginning or end of a quote, just when something is deleted in the middle.

Slash/

The slash is too casual for most academic writing. One exception is when the slash is used to separate individual lines of poetry that have been written out as one line. For example:

> Mary Oliver's poem starts with this image: "Once I looked inside / the darkness / of a shell folded like a pastry, / and there was a fancy face."

You also might see a slash used to separate a pair of opposites, like this:

> pass/fail, and/or, he/she

But this use is discouraged in formal writing. The more formal "pass or fail" should be used instead. Avoid "and/or"; make up your mind. While sexist language should be avoided, "he/she" isn't a good way to do that. Either change to a non-gender plural such as "they" or rephrase the sentence.

Takeaways

- The most common punctuation marks are end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks/italics. Study those.
- All the other punctuation marks are rare. Have a general sense of what they are and, if you decide to use one, look up the rule.

CHAPTER 6: PARAGRAPHS

6.1 The Structure of a Paragraph
6.2 Stand-alone Paragraphs

6.1 The Structure of a Paragraph

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will cover the following topics:

- topic sentences
- supporting detail
- transitions and conclusions
- paragraph length

The basic building blocks of language are words, which form sentences, which combine to make paragraphs. Paragraphs can stand alone or be combined to become essays, research papers, reports, letters, and books.

This chapter covers the parts of a paragraph, different types of paragraphs, and how to use paragraphs to build longer documents.

The Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph is generally composed of a topic sentence and supporting information. A stand-alone paragraph needs a concluding point; a paragraph that is part of a larger document may simply go on to the next point.

Topic Sentences

The main idea of the paragraph is stated in the topic sentence. A good topic sentence does the following:

- indicates what is in the rest of the paragraph
- contains both a topic and an opinion
- is clear and easy to follow
- does not include supporting details
- engages the reader

For example:

> Development of the Alaska oil fields created many problems for already-endangered wildlife.

This sentence introduces the topic and the writer's opinion. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to explain what the problems are and how they were created. The sentence is clear and the word choice is interesting.

Here is another example:

> Major league baseball has a history of cheating.

Again, the topic and opinion are clear, the details are saved for later, and the word choice is powerful.

Now look at this example:

> I think that people should not take their pets to work, even for special occasions, because it is disruptive and someone might get bitten by a dog or a rabbit.

Even though the topic and opinion are evident, there are too many details (under what conditions, types of pets, different consequences). The phrase "special occasions" is vague. Also, "I think that" is unnecessary.

Revised, that sentence might read like this:

People should not take their pets to work.

The most efficient place to put a topic sentence is at the beginning of the paragraph. In college and business writing, readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. Topic sentences make the writer's basic point easy to locate and understand.

Exercise 1

Read the following paragraph from Pablo Medina's student essay (posted in Ch. 8):

> I like going to the library because I can concentrate more effectively on doing my homework. It is a very quiet place, with designated study areas where people read in peace. When I go there, I sit in the corner because I do not like anybody disturbing me. Also, everybody respects the place and they try to not make any noise. Sometimes the library has special celebrations. Even though on these days it gets too noisy to study, I can manage the situation so I can concentrate better by asking someone to let me into one of the study rooms. There is no place like the library to really focus on my assignments.

Find Pablo's topic sentence and write it down.

Then, answer these questions about that sentence:

1. What is the topic of Pablo's paragraph? (Hint: The topic is not "I.")
2. What is Pablo's opinion on that topic? (Hint: The opinion is not "like.")

Notice that Pablo's topic sentence does not include any supporting details.

Supporting Ideas

The body of a paragraph contains supporting details to help explain, prove, or

expand the topic sentence. For example, a paragraph on the topic of people continuing to work into their 70s might have a topic sentence like this:

> Retirement is no longer guaranteed for many older Americans.

A supporting sentence could include some of the following:

- Fact: Something proven to be true. More than 20 percent of adults over age 65 are currently working or looking for work in the United States.
- Reason: An explanation or justification. The increasing life expectancy for an average American means retirement may last decades.
- Quotation: An opinion from an expert on the topic. "Retirement is not in my vocabulary," claimed long-lived actor Betty White.
- Example: An illustration of the point. Last year, my grandpa had to take a job with Walmart.

A topic sentence guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. Can you spot the sentence in the following paragraph that does <u>not</u> relate to the topic sentence?

> Health policy experts note that opposition to wearing a face mask during the COVID-19 pandemic is similar to opposition to the laws governing alcohol use. For example, some people believe drinking is an individual's choice, not something the government should regulate. However, when an individual's behavior impacts others–as when a drunk driver is involved in a fatal car accident–the dynamic changes. Seat belts are a good way to reduce the potential for physical injury in car accidents. Opposition to wearing a face mask during this pandemic is not simply an individual choice; it is a responsibility to others.

If you said the sentence that begins "Seat belts are" doesn't belong, you are correct. It does not support the paragraph's topic: opposition to regulations. If an idea isn't clearly connected to the topic sentence, the writer should tie it in or take it out.

Exercise 2

Look again at Pablo's paragraph in Exercise 1.

Identify three supporting details that explain, prove, or expand the topic sentence. Write them down.

Concluding Sentences

In a stand-alone paragraph, a strong conclusion draws together the ideas raised in the paragraph. A concluding sentence reminds readers of the main point without restating it in exactly the same words.

Concluding sentences can do any of the following:

- restate the main idea in a different way
- summarize the key points in the paragraph
- draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph
- make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information

Tip

Don't introduce new ideas in a conclusion. It will just confuse the reader.

For example, in the paragraph above about wearing face masks, the concluding sentence repeats the idea about opposition to masks without using the exact words of the topic sentence. It also summarizes the key point: responsibility to others.

Exercise 3

Look at Pablo's paragraph again. Find the concluding sentence. Then, answer this question:

Which of the following does Pablo do in his concluding sentence?

- restate the main idea in a different way
- summarize the key points in the paragraph
- draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph
- make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information

Transitions

Transitions are words or phrases that help the reader move from one idea to the next, whether within a paragraph or between paragraphs. For example:

> I am going to fix breakfast. Later, I will do the laundry.

"Later" transitions us from the first task to the second one. "Later" shows a sequence of events and establishes a connection between the tasks.

Look at this paragraph:

> There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **For example,** they get up to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient, gas-powered vehicle. **Also**, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **Because** they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **Given** the low costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many people will buy hybrids in the future.

Tip

A transition can appear at the end of a sentence or paragraph or at the beginning of the following sentence or paragraph, but never in both places.

The **bolded** words are transitions.

In a series of paragraphs, such as in an essay, transitions usually replace concluding sentences. They connect ideas and move the discussion forward. For example:

> Attending a community college is one way to save on the cost of college. Most lower division prerequisites–such as freshmen comp and intro to psychology–can be completed at either a community college or a four-year college, but cost significantly less at a community college.
>
> **Another way** to complete college on a budget is to apply for grants and scholarships. Although not everyone qualifies for these educational benefits, many students find that they do. It is worthwhile to look for these opportunities.
>
> **But perhaps the best way to** save money on education is to...

The words in bold are transitions. They organize the writer's ideas and keep the reader on track. They make the writing flow more smoothly.

Beginning writers tend to rely on ordinary transitions, such as "first" and "in con-

clusion." There are more interesting ways to tell a reader what you want them to know. Here are some examples:

Purpose	Transition Words and Phrases
to show a sequence of events	eventually, finally, previously, next, then, later on
to show additional information	also, in addition to, for example, for instance
to show consequences	therefore, as a result, because, since
to show comparison or contrast	however, but, nevertheless, although

These words have slightly different meanings so don't just substitute one for another that might sound newer or better. Use your dictionary to be sure you are saying what you mean to say.

Exercise 4

Look one final time at Pablo's paragraph. Find three words or phrases in the paragraph that work as transitions. List them.

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be? The answer is "long enough to explain your point but not too long." A paragraph can be fairly short (two or three sentences) or, in a complex essay, a paragraph can be half a page. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences.

As long as the writer maintains a close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. But often a long paragraph

will not hold the reader's interest. In such cases, divide a paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a transitional word or phrase.

Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. In a long piece of writing, **effective writers begin a new paragraph for each new idea they introduce.**

Takeaways

- Topic sentences express the main idea of the paragraph and the writer's opinion. In most academic essays, the topic sentence appears at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Supporting sentences explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences wrap-up the points made in the paragraph.
- Transitional words and phrases show how ideas relate to one another and move the reader on to the next point. In a series of paragraphs, transitions often replace concluding sentences.

6.2 Stand-alone Paragraphs

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will cover the following topics:

- summaries and evaluations
- critical thinking
- audience and tone

Often in college, you will be asked to write short responses, whether to a reading assignment or on an essay test. An instructor may ask you to respond to a short story, explain the main points in a chapter from your text, or report back on a lab experiment. Often these responses will be single paragraphs. Two common types of stand-alone paragraphs are summaries and evaluations.

Summary Paragraphs

A summary is a significantly shortened version of another, longer piece. A summary gives only a general sense of the information, capturing the main ideas, without necessarily following the order or emphasis of the original. **A summary is always written in your own words.**

You probably summarize every day. At some point in a casual conversation with a friend or classmate, you compressed a two-hour movie into a brief description. You described the major highlights in a few sentences, using your own words. That is a summary.

A summary will do the following:

- maintain the meaning of the original
- contain all the main points, without the supporting details
- not include your opinion
- use your words rather than those of the original writer

In writing a summary, you have to judge what is important and what isn't. The easiest way to do this is to "mark up" the document you want to summarize as you read–identifying the topic, the main supporting details, and any other significant points. Those notes are easily turned into a summary.

Here is a one-paragraph summary of the essay "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler. That essay was assigned to be read in Ch. 1.1, but you should re-read it again now, **before** you read this summary (the link is in Ch. 8).

> Mortimer J. Adler's main point in the essay "How to Mark a Book" is that a reader must **own** a book, not just buy it. He defines "ownership" as understanding the material, not simply scanning the page with one's eyes. Active reading, he says, involves marking up a book. He provides examples of how he does this: underlining, starring, circling key words or phrases, numbering, writing in the margins. If someone complains that writing notes slows down their reading, Adler explains that is the point: reading slowly and taking notes helps a reader understand and retain information. His final comment is crucial to the idea of "owning": he recommends that readers not lend their annotated books to friends because "it is almost like giving your mind away" (138).

Notice the summary begins with a broad claim. It retains the key points of the original but omits many details. The information has been **paraphrased**, avoiding Adler's specific vocabulary. Phrases like "prelude to possession" and "the soul of a book" belong to Adler. Where a particularly well-written phrase is used, it is quoted and **cited** correctly. Also, this summary does NOT include the writer's opinion.

How to Write a Summary

1. Carefully read the original document, making notes as you go. You must fully understand something before you try to explain it to someone else.
2. Then, put the original away. This is crucial; if you glance at the original now and then, you will accidentally copy words or sentence structures. Summarizing without referring to the original also forces you to understand the material before trying to explain it.
3. Write a single sentence that explains the point of the piece. Name the document and the author. This is your topic sentence.
4. Identify the several main ideas in the original. (You may refer to your notes, but do not look at the original.) Briefly explain each. These are your supporting details.
5. Read your summary to be sure it is clear and complete. Check that you have <u>not</u> included your opinion; a summary explains but does not comment on the original.
6. Add a concluding comment that refers to but does not repeat the topic sentence.
7. Now, re-read the original to be sure you didn't miss anything important.
8. Revise and edit your paragraph for clarity and correctness.

Note that the example summary paragraph above on the Adler essay does all of these things.

A summary will be far shorter than the original. It should include just enough information to recount the main points. A summary of a paragraph should be one or two sentences. A summary of a chapter or an essay might be a paragraph or maybe two. A summary of a whole book might be one or two pages.

It takes practice to be able to pull the essential information from a piece of writing, but there are many benefits to doing so. And you will be asked to do this task again and again in college.

Exercise 1

Go to Ch. 8 and read the essay "The Maker's Eye" by Donald Murray. If possible, print the document so you can mark it up. If you can't do that, take good notes as you read.

Following the steps above, write a summary of the Murray essay.

Your summary should be a single paragraph (at least 150 words, but no more than 200). Be sure your paragraph has a topic sentence, clear supporting points, and a concluding comment.

Revise and edit your paragraph for clarity and correctness.

Note: This is a graded assignment, so be sure to submit your best work. If you need help, schedule some time with our embedded tutor.

Evaluation Paragraphs

An evaluation judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations are based on set standards, influenced by opinion and prior knowledge.

At work, a supervisor may evaluate an employee based on how well he meets the company's goals, but the evaluation also includes the supervisor's opinion and prior experience of the employee.

In college, when a student expresses an opinion about a piece of writing or a topic, that evaluation should be based on specific criteria, careful reading, and any prior knowledge.

Following is an evaluation paragraph on the Adler essay:

> Even though it was written in 1940, "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer

> J. Adler is still relevant. Many of his examples are outdated and even funny. We can't buy a book for less than a dollar these days. Many people have never heard of a bookplate or an ice-box, let alone Rudy Vallee or John Dewey. Hardly anyone reads *Plutarch's Lives*. But Adler's notion of how learning happens hasn't changed. We still get to know books better by having a conversation with the writer. Active reading is still promoted by educators because it is the best way to organize and retain complex information. Taking notes still makes reading go more slowly, and reading quickly is still not better than reading carefully. Even in the 21st century, when faster is supposedly better for everything from data to dating, Adler's advice should be heeded. If we want to really understand a problem, a person, or a piece of writing, we have to put in the time.

Notice how the paragraph begins with a broad statement of the reader's personal judgment, followed by examples and explanations. Because an evaluation includes the writer's point of view and reasons, it requires more critical thinking than a summary.

Critical Thinking

We know what "thinking" is. The word "critical" can mean "crucial" or "potentially dangerous." To "be critical" often means to be disapproving. But in college, "critical thinking" is neither negative nor life-threatening. It simply means **actively analyzing something** (a poem, a piece of music, a political issue, a scientific experiment) **using observation, reflection, and reason to draw a conclusion**.

To engage in critical thinking, a student must be willing to do three things:

- read carefully with the goal of fully understanding
- use specific standards to measure the material
- think reasonably, using previous experience and knowledge

How to Write an Evaluation

1. Carefully read the original document, taking notes as you go. In fact, reading the piece several times is a good idea. You must fully understand it

before you have a right to an opinion.

2. Take 10 minutes to jot down your thoughts. Start simply: Did you like it? Why or why not? Then get more specific. What did the writer do that was effective? Were there any problems? What observations did you make as you read?
3. Identify several criteria for evaluation. What makes the piece good or bad? You might consider the way the piece was organized, or how well the writer supports her point, or whether the information was repetitive or the language evocative, whether the writer's argument was logical or not.
4. In one sentence, write your opinion. Name the document and author in this sentence so we know what you are evaluating. This is your topic sentence.
5. Expand your point. Provide examples from the original. Use transitions to connect the ideas. These are your supporting details.
6. Wrap up with a final thought that reflects your point but doesn't repeat things you've already said. That is your concluding sentence.
7. Re-read the original essay to be sure you didn't miss anything important.

Notice that the example evaluation paragraph above on the Adler essay does all of these things.

Exercise 2

Re-read "The Maker's Eye" by Donald Murray, then write a one-paragraph evaluation of his essay.

Important: Do not just agree or disagree with his point. Your job is to analyze and evaluate the how well he has made that point.

An evaluation paragraph is your judgment, but it is not just your gut feeling. A judgment should be based on sound reasoning, examples, and logic. State your opinion in a clear topic sentence, use supporting details to explain your opinion, and wrap up your paragraph with an effective final point.

Your evaluation should be a single paragraph (at least 150 words but no more than 200 words). Revise and edit your paragraph for clarity and correctness.

Note: This is a graded assignment, so submit your best work. If you need help, work with our embedded tutor.

Audience and Tone

Being aware of "invisible" readers is a skill you likely already possess. Consider the following notes. Which would the writer send to her parents? Which would she send to her best friend?

> Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think I caught a cold from one of the patients. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

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

Most likely, you matched each note to its intended reader easily.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers transmit a range of attitudes using sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. In the second example above, notice the writer uses slang ("OMG," "peeps," "def"), casual punctuation (!), and informal sentence structure (starting a sentence with "And"). Those choices set a certain tone.

A writer's tone should always match the audience and the purpose of the piece of writing. The tone of college writing is slightly formal–not casual, but not stiff. You should sound like yourself, but the way you would speak in a formal situation.

Takeaways

- Common types of paragraphs in college include summaries and evaluations.
- Summaries do not include your opinion; evaluations do.
- Critical thinking means actively analyzing something using observation, reflection, and reason to draw a conclusion.
- Writing must be appropriate in tone for the purpose of the document and the intended audience.

CHAPTER 7: ESSAYS

7.1 Getting Started
7.2 Organizing Ideas
7.3 Writing the Draft
7.4 Polishing the Draft
7.5 Correcting the Final

7.1 Getting Started

Preview

This section of Ch. 7 will cover the following topics:

- using a writing process
- the purpose of prewriting
- types of prewriting
- choosing a good topic

Effective writing is simply good ideas, expressed well and arranged clearly.

But that can be more difficult than it sounds. Writing is not something one just sits down and does. You can write a text like that or a shopping list, but anything you are going to submit to a reader for evaluation–a job application, an essay, a report–should be planned and polished.

How does effective writing happen? Great writers use a writing process. Students who want to improve their writing learn that a writing process will help them reach that goal. A writing process also reduces stress and improves grades.

The Writing Process

The writing process outlined in this chapter is not difficult, but it takes several sessions. It has five steps:

1. **Prewrite:** generate and begin developing ideas

2. **Organize:** identify the document's purpose, develop the thesis, generate the basic content, and choose an organizational pattern
3. **Draft:** develop the points identified in the outline, add detail, examples, and commentary, then write an engaging introduction and a useful conclusion (after this step, the writer has a rough draft)
4. **Revise:** review and reshape the draft; make moderate or major changes, adding or deleting sentences or even paragraphs, expanding important ideas, replacing a vague word with a more precise one, reorganizing points to improve quality and clarity
5. **Edit:** make final changes to ensure adherence to standard writing conventions; fix errors in grammar and spelling, then apply formatting guidelines to ensure correctness (after this step, the writer has a first real draft)

Once these five steps have been completed, a careful writer will seek the advice of knowledgeable others before considering the project complete. In college, this usually takes the form of peer editing and tutors.

Then, a writer repeats Steps 4 and 5, re-revising and re-editing until she is satisfied. How long this takes depends on how long the writer has. In a timed exam, this step has to be done quickly. For a major paper, the writer should expect to do multiple revisions. The longer and more important the document is, the more time should be spent polishing. (For example, this textbook was revised and edited dozens of times with feedback from 4 editors!)

Notice the steps are similar to those in any creative project, not just writing. You'd follow the same steps to design a house or build a robot or paint a painting: come up with ideas (often vague at first), give them some structure, make a first attempt, figure out what needs improving, then refine and polish until you are satisfied.

Common Misconceptions

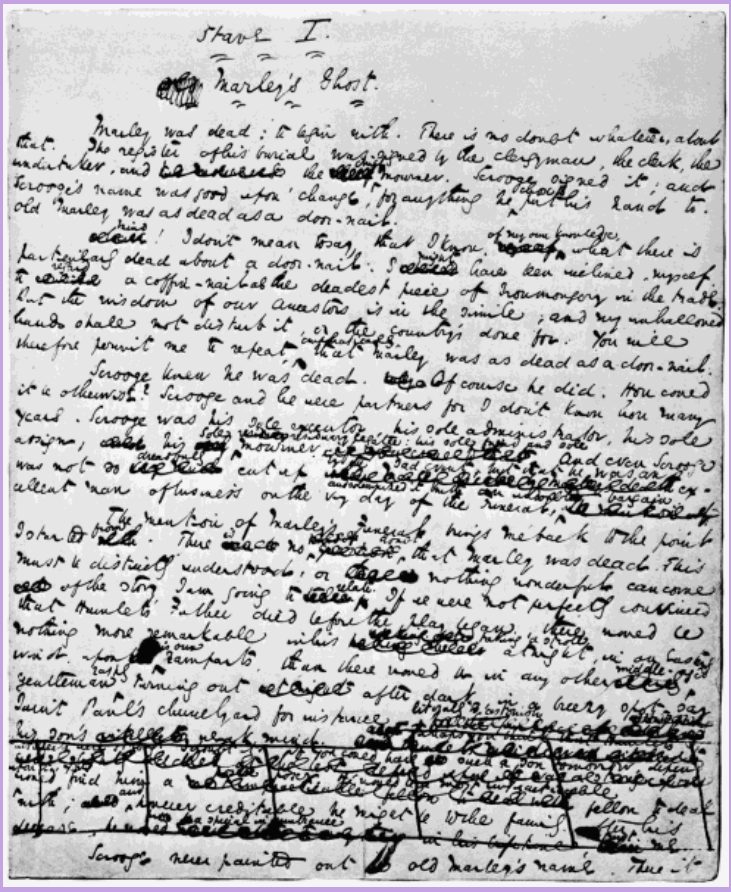
Some students have had good experiences with a writing process. Some have never even heard of a "writing process." A few are hopeful. Others are doubtful that anything can help. Following are some common misconceptions students have about a writing process:

- "I do not have to waste time on prewriting if I understand the assignment." Even if the task is straightforward and you feel ready to start writing, taking time to develop ideas before you write a draft gives you an opportunity to consider what you want to say before you jump in. It actually saves time overall.
- "It is important to complete a formal, numbered outline for every writing assignment." For assignments such as lengthy research papers or books, a formal outline is helpful. For most college assignments, a scratch outline like the one recommended in this process is sufficient. The important thing is that you have a plan.
- "My draft will be better if I write it when I am feeling inspired." By all means, take advantage of moments of inspiration. But understand that "inspired" work is often disorganized, incomplete, and unclear. Also, in college you often have to write when you are not in the mood.
- "My instructor will tell me everything I need to revise." It is your job, not your instructor's, to transform a rough draft into a final, polished piece of writing.
- "I am a good writer, so I do not need to revise or edit." Revising and editing make poor writers into good writers, and good writers into great writers. Shakespeare revised his work. So did Jane Austen and George Orwell. Here is what Ernest Hemingway said when asked about revision:

> Interviewer: "How much rewriting do you do?"
> Hemingway: "It depends. I rewrote the ending of *Farewell to Arms*, the last page of it, 39 times before I was satisfied."
> Interviewer: "Was there some technical problem there? What was it that stumped you?"
> Hemingway: "Getting the words right."
>
> —*The Paris Review* Interview, 1956

Graphics

Here is an example of one famous writer's revisions. This is the first page of Charles Dickens' hand-written manuscript of his classic novel *A Christmas Carol*. If Dickens had to revise and edit, you probably need to do so as well...



Stave I.

Marley's Ghost.

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it; and Scrooge's name was good upon 'change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead. Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnly disposed of the business.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a walk, in any weather, upon his own rampart, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman's turning out after dark in a breezy spot—say Saint Paul's churchyard, for instance—and frightening his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it

Step 1: Prewriting

If you think a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on a blank computer screen is scary, you are not alone. Beginning to write can be intimidating. However, any big project can be accomplished if you take it a step at a time.

Prewriting is the first stage of this writing process. Prewriting can help you get started if you don't know where to begin. It also can help you narrow a topic that is too broad, help you explore what you know about your chosen topic, and find interesting examples and details to use in your paper. Prewriting is just brainstorming in writing.

We get our ideas from many places: what we read, what we hear, what we see and experience, our imagination. Prewriting helps us turn all of that information into words on a page. Prewriting is a way to think about what you think, to break through mental blocks, to get ideas out of your head and down on paper so you have something with which to work.

There are a few, very simple rules for prewriting:

- Use pencil and paper or a computer, whichever allows you to write more quickly.
- Write your topic at the top of the page to remind yourself to stick to it. If you wander off, just look at your topic and wander back.
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, repetition, or exact wording. Your goal is to simply get as much information on the page as you can.
- Write for 10 minutes. More is unnecessary; less is not enough time to find unexpected ideas. Don't stop and re-start. Keep pushing your brain to come up with one more idea and one more idea. That is when you find interesting and even surprising stuff.

Types of prewriting explained below include Freewriting, Questioning, Listing, and Clustering. Try them all, then use the technique that works best for your thinking process or for the specific assignment.

Freewriting

Freewriting is when you jot down thoughts that come to mind in rough sentences or phrases. Try not to doubt or question your ideas. Write freely. Don't be self-conscious; nobody is going to grade this. Once you start writing without limitations, you may find you have more to say than you thought.

Here is an example of Freewriting on the topic of "the media." Notice the writer isn't worrying about grammar, fragments, or even staying on topic. She is just writing down everything that comes to mind about her topic.

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my e-mail. E-mail could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford the movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of color. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me—or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us!

Listing

Listing is like Freewriting, but instead of writing across the page, you go from top to bottom, listing topics or details, one after another, without trying to sort or organize.

Here is an example of Listing on the topic of "the media." Notice the ideas bounce from one to another, then off in a different direction. The point is to get as many ideas on the page as possible.

"The Media"

news magazines
newspapers
pop magazines
journalists
paparazzi
gossip
"fake news"
ethics
trust
lies
Walter Cronkite
Edward R. Murrow
multiple sources
single sources
politics
protests
Vietnam
civil rights
riots in Ferguson
protests in Portland
silencing dissent
John Lewis
fear
silence the press
state media
power
control
information
trustworthy
online media
bias
what else????
investigation
New York Times
Washington Post
too much information
too little information
conspiracy theories
White House press sec.
commentary vs. news
misinformation
Rachel Maddow
SNL
FOX
BBC
news cycle
reputation
4th Estate
social media
honesty
"medium/message"
press secretary
retractions
no ideas!
editorial staff
yellow journalism
trust
advertising
too much information
the truth
who says so?
reputations/awards
fact checking

Questioning

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

In everyday situations, we pose these questions to get information. Who will be my partner for the project? What do I need to get at the grocery store? Why is my car making that noise? In prewriting, answering these kind of questions can help you recall ideas you already have and generate new thoughts about a topic.

To do Questioning, write the words "who, what, when, where, why, how" down the left-hand side of a sheet of paper, leaving space between the words. Then, in the blank space, answer the questions as they relate to your topic in as many ways as you can. Jump down to answer a question, then jump back up to answer a different one. Fill up the page.

Here is an example of Questioning on the topic of "the media":

Questions	Responses
Who?	Students, teachers, parents, politicians, employees–almost everyone uses media. Who creates media? Journalists, reporters, big companies, political groups. I guess anyone who wants to share information with others.
What?	Lots of things can be called "the media." Television, radio, e-mail (?), newspapers, magazines, books. Is Dear Abby media? Are advertisements media? What about false advertising?
When?	Media has been around a long time, but seems a lot more important now. Is that because of computers? When did the news move from newspapers to TV to online? Is that good or bad?
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. In homes, at work, in cars, on cell phones, even on watches and glasses!
Why?	This is a good question. Maybe we have mass media because we have the technology. But even in the 1700s we had newspapers, I think. I do think journalism is still important. How else can we know what is going on across the country or around the world? Are "the media" and "journalism" the same thing? Maybe not. One is information; the other is entertainment.
How?	Well, media is possible because of technology but I don't know how they all work! How does a news article go from the event to me. Do I need to know? Probably.

Clustering

Clustering allows you to visualize related ideas. Many writers like this method because it is easy to see how ideas connect.

To do Clustering, write your general topic in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then brainstorm specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them. Add as many sub-ideas as you can think of. Write for 10 minutes; fill the page. A good Clustering exercise should fill the page with dozens of ideas.

Note: You can do this on a computer (like the example below) but it's better on paper. On a computer, you spend too much time making little circles and choosing colors. On paper, you spend the time coming up with more ideas. The example below is just a start; each bubble needs to be developed further.

High Definition
Digital Recording
Blu-ray
Cable
DVDs
TV
Music
Mass Media
Downloads vs. CDs
Radio
Piracy

Exercise 1

You will do two prewrites for your essay.

First:

> Do a first prewrite on the assigned topic. Your goal is to explore a broad topic to narrow it and make it your own. Use one of the prewriting styles explained above. You should end up with at least two pages full of words and ideas.
>
> After you finish, read over what you wrote. Identify one or two narrow topics that might make a good essay. If you did not find a good topic, do another prewrite using a different style. Do not move on to the next task until you have a good topic for your essay.

Then:

> Take that narrowed topic and do a second prewrite on it, using a different style of prewriting. The goal of this second prewrite is to generate lots of details about the topic to use in your essay. Again, you should produce at least two more pages full of words.

If you succeeded with these prewrites, you should have a good topic, one that interests you and is narrow enough to cover thoroughly in a short paper. You should also have lots of details to help you explain your point. Keep doing prewrites until you reach that goal.

Write your topic at the end of the document and submit it to the instructor for approval before moving on to the next step.

The goal of prewriting is to get information out of your head and onto a piece of

paper where you can work with it. With a few ideas on paper, writers are often more comfortable continuing to write.

Choosing a Topic

Before you decide firmly on your topic, put it through a simple test. Answer these questions:

- Am I interested in this topic? Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge of or experience with my topic, or do I have the time to learn more about it?
- Is this topic narrow enough to cover thoroughly, but large enough to provide me with ideas to explore?
- Does it meet the assignment requirements?

When you can answer "yes" to all those questions, you are ready for Step 2 of the writing process.

Takeaways

- A writing process helps students complete any writing assignment more successfully.
- The process includes five steps. Allow sufficient time to complete each step before moving on to the next one.
- Prewriting is the first step. Prewriting is the transfer of ideas from abstract thoughts and feelings into words, phrases, and sentences on paper.
- Types of prewriting include Freewriting, Listing, Questioning, and Clustering.

7.2 Organizing Ideas

Preview

This section of Ch. 7 covers the following topics:

- developing a thesis
- using a critical question to generate the essay content
- building with paragraphs
- constructing an outline
- choosing an organizing pattern

Prewriting helps a writer explore possible topics for a paper and figure out what to say. But to communicate ideas to someone else, those ideas have to be organized. That is the goal of Step 2: organizing ideas by developing a thesis and an outline.

Step 2: Organizing

Organizing begins with articulating your point. What are you going to say in this essay?

Thesis Statements

A thesis is a clear statement of the essay's main idea. It is the essay topic and the writer's position or opinion on that topic. It's sort of like the topic sentence of a paragraph, but it's the topic sentence for the entire essay.

Here is an example thesis:

Urban trees are key to a healthy environment for humans. (The essay topic is "trees in the city" and the writer's opinion is that they are crucial to human health.)

A thesis is not just the topic; it is what the writer has to say about that topic. Each thesis states an opinion, a point. It is not just a fact; it is the writer's thoughts, feelings, or position on the topic.

Following are guidelines for a strong, clear thesis statement:

- **A thesis is one sentence.** The subject of the thesis is the subject of the essay. Write it first. (For example: "Mail-in voting...")
- **A thesis must include an opinion,** the point you will make about your subject. Write that second. (For example: "...should be required in every state.") If the thesis is simply a fact ("Americans over the age of 18 can vote."), you have nowhere to go.
- **A good thesis should generate a "critical question,"** either "How?" or "Why?" This is the question you will answer in the body of the essay. A good critical question for our example thesis would be "Why?" The body paragraphs will explain why mail-in voting should be required.
- **A good thesis is clear and specific.** Avoid vague language ("interesting," "terrible," "good"). Can you prove that? In our example, "should be required" is much clearer than "would be a good idea."
- **A good thesis is short and simple.** Make sure your position is not too broad or too narrow. Don't tackle two or three ideas at once. Our example thesis does not say mail-in voting should be "encouraged and monitored"–it picks one focus: "required."
- **A good thesis is a statement,** not a question (not "What should we do about...?") or an announcement (not "The subject of this paper is...").
- **Be aware of your audience.** Take a stand without insulting the reader. ("Only anarchists support mail-in voting" is unnecessarily offensive.) If you can't make a point without insulting people who disagree with you, you will never persuade anyone.

The job of a thesis is to generate and govern the essay. To generate something is to cause it to be created. To govern something is to control it. A thesis statement

first creates, then controls the essay. The thesis is usually presented in the essay's introductory paragraph, often as the last sentence.

Exercise 1

Create a thesis for your essay.

- First, write down the topic you've chosen.
- Then, finish the sentence by stating your opinion or position on that topic.
- Identify the critical question (How? Why?) you intend to answer in your essay. If the thesis doesn't easily lead to a critical question, it needs more work.
- Test your thesis against the guidelines above. Be sure you can answer "yes" to all the guidelines.
- Then, check your thesis to be sure it meets the assignment requirements.

When you finish this assignment, you should have a single, clear sentence followed by a one-word question.

Do not proceed to Ex. 2 until your thesis and critical question have been approved by the instructor.

Outlining

An outline is a written plan for the essay. Without clear organization, your reader can become confused and lose interest.

We use the **critical question** generated by the thesis to create the outline. For example:

Thesis: Mail-in voting should be required in every state.

Critical question: Why?

Answer: Because it is cheaper, easier, and safer.

Those three answers become the three main points in the outline and, eventually, the body of your essay.

An outline does not have to be complicated or formal. A short, informal "scratch" outline that lists your main points in the order you will present them will help you visualize your argument and ensure the structure is clear to a reader.

Here is a basic structure for a short essay:

- introduction, thesis statement
- main point, supporting details
- main point, supporting details
- main point, supporting details
- conclusion

Here is an **example scratch outline** on the topic of mail-in voting:

- Introduction: quote from Stacey Abrams on barriers to voting, thesis: Mail-in voting should be required in every state.
- First section of the body: less expensive (cost of running polling sites/voting machines vs. postage)
- Next section of the body: eliminates barriers (work conflicts, family responsibilities, disabilities, long lines)
- Last section of the body: safer (paper trail, eliminates voting machine interference, no health risk)
- Conclusion: lots of benefits, few downsides

Notice how easy it would be to turn this outline into an essay draft by simply adding explanations and details to each paragraph?

Ordering Information

Once you know what you want to say, you have to decide the best order to present the information. There are three basic patterns to organize the body of an essay: chronological order, emphatic order, and spatial order.

Chronological **order** is when events are arranged in the order they actually happen. Chronological order is used for any topic that occurs over time, such as

- explaining the history of an event or a topic
- telling a story or relating an experience
- explaining how to do or to make something

For example, an essay about the history of the airline industry would begin with its inception and progress through the essential events up to the present day. This method uses transition words such as "then," "after that," and "finally."

Emphatic **order** is when your points start with the least important and build to the most important argument, which comes last. Emphatic order is best used for

- persuading and convincing
- ranking items by their benefit or significance
- illustrating a problem and solution

Note: The example outline above on mail-in voting is organized emphatically: it moves from a good reason, to a better one, to the best one. Emphatic order is common in persuasive essays because it allows the writer to increasingly strengthen his argument.

Key transitions might be "one important reason is," "just as importantly," and "but the most important."

Spatial **order** means explaining or describing objects as they are arranged in space. Spatial order is best for

- helping readers visualize something you want them to see
- evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, sound)

For example, an essay that describes the parts of a guitar would use spatial order. You create a picture for the reader that moves in an orderly, logical progression using clear directional signals ("to the left is...," "above that...," "on the back is...")

These three organizational patterns–chronological, emphatic, and spatial–are often combined in a long paper, but usually used alone in short essays. The key is to choose a pattern consciously, one that will best help you achieve your purpose.

Exercise 2

Create an outline for your essay.

- Choose one of the organizational patterns listed above, the one you think will best help you explain your essay's point. Then, answer your critical question three (or maybe four) times. For example, if an emphatic pattern seems to make the most sense for your essay, identify three examples and put them in emphatic order. If chronological seems to work better, identify three events and put them in chronological order.
- Above those points, write your thesis, critical question, and a brief note on the content of your introduction.
- Below those points, add a brief note about how you will conclude the essay.
- Then, below the outline, tell us which organizational pattern you chose and why.

The final outline should look like the example scratch outline above and be no longer than half a page.

Do not proceed to Ch. 7.3 until your outline has been approved by the instructor.

Outlining is how you figure out if the essay is going to work. Does your thesis identify your point? Does the body of the essay explain how or why the thesis is true? Is the organizational structure you chose the best option to explain your point? Do you have sufficient details? If not, do more prewriting or organizing.

This process may take you a couple of hours, but the time is well spent. It will

shorten the time necessary for drafting, but more importantly: it will ensure that your essay is focused and clear.

If a writer just sits down and starts writing a draft, it is likely to be disorganized and unfocused. The purpose of prewriting and organizing is to identify a topic, provide a clear direction, generate lots of useful details, and figure out the best organizational pattern to make your point **before** putting a ton of time into drafting. With that start, writing the draft is much easier and the resulting document is clearer and more interesting.

Takeaways

- A thesis statement is your topic and your position on that topic.
- An outline is the plan for structuring your essay.
    - Chronological order is commonly used in expository writing.
    - Emphatic order is most appropriate in a persuasive paper.
    - Spatial order is best for helping readers visualize something.

7.3 Writing the Draft

Preview

This section of Ch. 7 will cover the following topics:

- turning the thesis and outline into a draft
- using topic sentences to generate content
- choosing a title

Most documents are composed of three specific types of paragraphs: introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs. This is true of a short story, a scientific study, a business report, and a college essay or research paper.

All paragraphs focus on a single idea and provide details that explain or illustrate. But introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions have very different purposes.

Introductory Paragraphs

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow along as you expand your point. If your introductory paragraph is dull or unfocused, your reader will not care about continuing.

The introductory paragraph's job is to attract the reader's interest and present the topic and the writer's opinion about the topic (this is called the "thesis"). In a long paper, an introduction might also supply necessary background information or preview major points.

When writing an introductory paragraph, your main goals are to be interesting and clear. Following are several techniques for strong introductory paragraphs:

- **Begin with a broad, general statement of the topic, narrowing to the thesis.** For example: "Voting is a responsibility, but one that is not always easy to accomplish..." Add some detail, then end with the thesis: "Mail-in ballots would make voting cheaper, easier, and less prone to fraud."
- **Start with an idea or a situation the opposite of the one you will develop.** For example: "In some countries, people have to risk their lives to cast a vote. In the U.S., it is usually just inconvenient." Add detail that leads to the thesis.
- **Convince the readers the subject applies to them or is something they should know about.** For example: "Conversations about politics happen on the bus, at the dinner table, in the classroom. One topic of concern is voter turnout." Add detail that leads to the thesis.
- **Use an incident or brief story–something that happened to you or that you heard about.** For example: "I remember the first time I voted." Add more details, then end with the thesis: "Everyone should have the same chance I had to cast their vote. Mail-in ballots would help."
- **Ask questions so the reader thinks about the answers or so you can answer the questions.** For example: "How many people complain about politics? Why do they just talk? Why don't they vote? Mail-in ballots would make voting easier for many people."
- **Use a quotation to add someone else's voice to your own.** For example: "Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, 'Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.' A key objective in a democracy, then, is to make it easy to vote. Mail-in ballots would do that."

Notice that each technique starts with some sort of hook to grab the reader's attention, follows with details, then ends with the thesis. An effective introduction stimulates the audience's interest, says what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading. It ends with a thesis that presents the main point of the essay.

Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph is just like the stand-alone paragraphs we worked on in Ch. 6.2, except most body paragraphs end with a transition to the next paragraph or begin with a transition from the previous paragraph (one or the other, never both!).

Topic sentences are vital to body paragraphs because they tie the paragraph to your thesis and remind readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence will feel unfocused and scattered.

The information in body paragraphs should do the following:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be clear and detailed. General examples are not nearly as compelling or useful because they are too obvious and typical. To say "students worry about exams" is not as effective as saying "the average community college student often feels overwhelmed during finals week."
- **Be selective.** When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all. Effective writers resist the temptation to overwhelm. Choose wisely. If you have five reasons why exercise programs fail, pick the best three

Body paragraphs each begin with a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph and connects that idea to the thesis statement. That is followed by supporting details (facts, examples, explanations) that develop or explain the topic sentence.

Concluding Paragraphs

Conclusions are more than just stopping. A strong concluding paragraph should convey a sense of completeness or closure. What do you conclude based on the points you made? Leave a good final impression.

There are several ways to write an effective conclusion:

- **Philosophize.** What does this all mean? End with a thought-provoking insight that asks your reader to think further about what you have writ-

ten–why the subject is important, what should be done, what choice should be made.

- **Synthesize**, but don't summarize and don't repeat yourself. Show the reader how the points you made fit together.
- **Predict** (what may happen) **or make a recommendation** (what should be done). Help your reader see the topic differently.

It might be easier to consider what NOT to do in a conclusion:

- **Do not** use the phrase "In conclusion." Readers can see that your essay is about to end. You don't have to point it out. That is a clumsy transition.
- **Do not** simply restate your original point. You have referred to it throughout the paper; repeating it one more time can actually be annoying to the reader.
- **Do not** introduce a new idea. A conclusion can expand the reader's sense of the topic, but it shouldn't jump to a different topic altogether.
- **Do not** make sentimental, emotional appeals. If your argument is well-argued, the reader already agrees with you (or at least has agreed to consider your point).
- **Do not** directly address the reader. An essay is written for the general reader. Do not use "you." If you want to claim your position, say "I." If you want the reader to feel included, say "we." If you want to look objective, say "most people" or "students in college."

Think of an essay like this:

introduction + body paragraphs = conclusion

The equal sign is important. Your point and your support should lead to the conclusion, just like 2 + 2 = 4.

An effective conclusion reinforces the thesis and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

Step 3: Drafting

Drafting is the stage of the writing process when you develop the first complete version of the document.

The Body Comes First

Although many students assume an essay is written from beginning to end in one sitting, most well-written essays are built one section at a time, not necessarily in order, and over several sessions.

Write the body of your essay first, before you write the introduction.

This may seem odd. Why write the middle before the beginning? Because the body of your essay IS the essay. Think of the introduction and conclusion as an appetizer and dessert for the main course. The body of your essay is the meat, potatoes, and vegetables. How can you write an introduction if you don't yet know what you are going to introduce? Write the body first.

The body of your essay is where you explain, expand upon, detail, and support your thesis. Each point in your outline can be turned into a topic sentence, which then becomes a paragraph or two by adding details that clarify and demonstrate your point.

Work on the body of your essay in several separate sessions. You'll be surprised the kind of changes you want to make to something you wrote yesterday when you look at it again today. Keep working on the body until it says what you want.

Exercise 1

Using the thesis and outline you created in Ch. 7.2 and following the instructions above, write the body of your essay.

Before you finish, review the information in Ch. 6 on topic sentences, supporting ideas, and transitions. Be sure that information is reflected in your body paragraphs.

Then move on to the next step.

Write the Introduction Second

The introductory paragraph attracts the reader's interest and presents the thesis. In a long paper, it can also supply any necessary background information or preview major points.

Read through the body of your essay one more time and think about what you could say to invite your reader in. How could you make the reader curious? As with the body, schedule at least two sessions to write your introduction. Coming back to reconsider what you've said gives you a new perspective.

Exercise 2

Write your introductory paragraph.

- Decide which technique from the list above would work best to introduce your essay.
- Draft your introduction, starting with a hook and ending with your thesis.

Work on your introductory paragraph until it is clear, focused, and engaging. Insert it before your body paragraphs.

Then move on to the next step.

The Conclusion Is Next

Once you have put together your body paragraphs and attached your introduction at the beginning, it is time to write a conclusion. It is vital to put as much effort into the conclusion as you did for the rest of the essay. A conclusion that is unorganized or repetitive can undercut even the best essay.

A conclusion's job is to wrap the essay up so the reader is left with a good final impression. A strong concluding paragraph brings the paper to a graceful end.

Exercise 3

Write a concluding paragraph for your essay. Check the guidance on what a conclusion should do. Work on your conclusion until it is clear, focused, and engaging. Insert it after your body paragraphs.

Then move on to the next steps.

The Title

Titles are a brief and interesting summary of what the document is about. Titles are generally more than one word but no more than several words. Like the headline in a newspaper or magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

Go to Ch. 8 and look at the titles of the essays listed there. Notice which ones are both engaging and informative.

Caution: Don't be too clever with a title. A clear title is better than something creative but confusing. Also, remember that "Essay 1" is not a title.

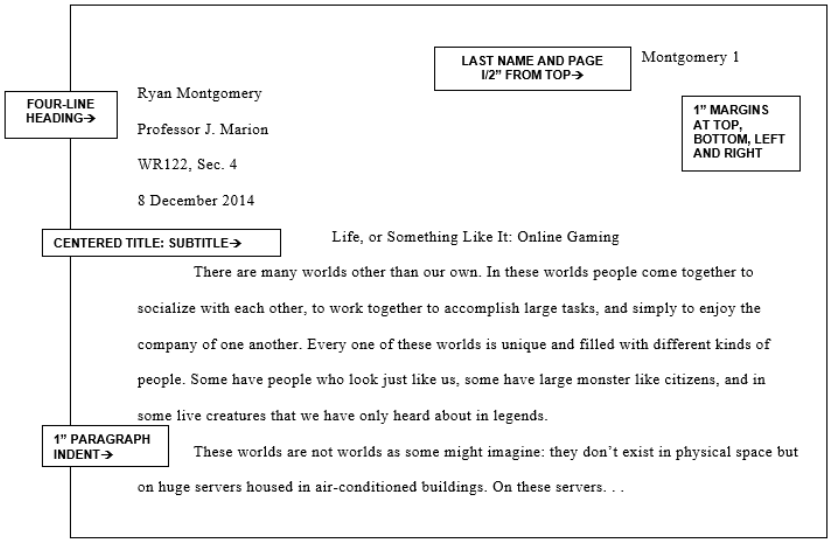
Adding Formatting

Once your draft is written, the document should be formatted. The format of a document is how it is laid out, what it looks like.

An instructor, a department, or a college will often require students to follow a specific formatting style. The most common styles are APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association). Guides like Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* and websites like the Purdue Online Writing Lab

can help you understand how formatting works. Most writing classes, including this one, use MLA.

Below is an example of MLA formatting:



Here is an explanation of the formatting example above:

- Use standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11").
- Double-space all of the paper, from the heading through the last page.
- Set the document margins to 1" on all sides.
- Do not use a title page unless requested to do so by your instructor.
- Create a running header with your last name and the page number in the upper right-hand corner, 1" from the top and aligned with the right margin. Number all pages consecutively.
- List your name, the instructor's name and title, the course name and section, and the assignment's due date in the heading on the top left of the first page. (Notice the date is written day, month, year without commas.)
- Center the essay title below the heading. Follow the rules on capitalization in Ch. 3.2. Do not increase font size, use bold, or underline.

- Begin the paper below the title. No extra spaces.
- Indent paragraphs 1" from the left margin.

Exercise 4

Give your essay a title, and then format it correctly.

Submit this draft to the instructor. Do not proceed to Ch. 7.4 until your draft has been approved.

Am I Finished Now?

The first draft of your essay is a complete piece of writing, but it is not finished. The best writing goes through multiple drafts before it is complete.

The final steps of the writing process–revising and editing–are crucial to the quality of the final document (and the grade you receive). During the next two steps, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft.

Takeaways

- Most documents are built with three types of paragraphs: introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
    - The job of introductory paragraphs is to engage the reader and present the paper's topic in a thesis.
    - Body paragraphs develop the topic with supporting details.
    - Concluding paragraphs wrap the paper up gracefully.
- Write the body paragraphs first, using your outline to guides the essay's development. Each main idea becomes the topic sentence of a new paragraph.
- Write the introduction after the body paragraphs. Write the conclusion last.
- Titles should be clear and concise.

7.4 Polishing the Draft

Preview

This section of Ch. 7 will cover the following topics:

- the difference between revision and editing
- revising for clarity
- revising for quality

You may think a completed first draft means you are finished. Experienced writers know that draft is just half-way to the finish line.

Revising and editing are the final two steps in the writing process, and completing those steps successfully are the difference between substandard work and excellent writing.

- When you revise, you add, cut, move, or change information to make your ideas more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing. **The goal of revision is clarity.**
- When you edit, you fix problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. Then you format the document according to the guidelines set by your instructor. **The goal of editing is correctness.**

This section of Ch. 7 covers revision. The next section will cover editing.

Step 4: Revising

The word "revision" tells you what to do: "vision" is seeing, and you will look carefully at your draft during this step. When you revise, your job is to look critically and find things to improve.

Many people hear the words "critical" and "criticism" and think of negative feelings that make them blush or grumble. However, as a writer, you need to **be critical of yourself in a positive way.** You need to train your eye to see problems and learn to trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. "Critical" also means "important and crucial."

Tip

The essay "The Maker's Eye" by Donald Murray provides great insight into the revision process. A link to the essay is in Ch. 8.

When revising, look at organization, clarity, and writing quality.

First Revision: Organization

All the ideas in each paragraph and the entire essay should be arranged in a way that makes logical sense.

The following tasks do not have to be done in order. In fact, mixing up the order might help you focus better. Look at one of the body paragraphs, then skip back to the introduction, then skip forward to the conclusion, then do a different body paragraph. That way, your mind can focus on one segment at a time.

- Read the introductory paragraph. Ask yourself if it is as strong as you can make it. Is it engaging? Is the thesis clearly stated?
- Read the topic sentence of each body paragraph and ask yourself if it is tied to the thesis.
- Read each body paragraph and ask yourself if you have provided adequate details and examples to explain the topic sentence, without repeating yourself.

- Be sure the body paragraphs are logically organized. Read the three topic sentences, one after the other, and ask yourself if the order is effective. Would your point be clearer if you changed the order?
- Read the concluding paragraph. Does it provide a sense of closure rather than just repeating what has already been said?

Second Revision: Pruning

Trees grow well with sufficient sunshine and rain. Sometimes, though, they grow so vigorously that their roots invade the foundation of the house, branches knock against windows, and leaves fall into rain gutters, clogging them. To ensure the tree remains attractive and healthy, it often needs pruning.

That is true about writing too. Many student writers are worried about not having enough to say. A more serious problem with student writing is wordiness. Three common problems in student writing are focus, transitions, and clarity.

Problem #1: Focus

Sometimes writers cannot resist a good **digression**. Even though you might enjoy such detours, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Read the following paragraph twice. The first time, include the words that are lined out. The second time, skip them. Notice the information about the shopping experience gets the reader off track. The paragraph is clearer and more focused without the digression.

> Buying a television can be confusing. The first important decision ~~as the shopper walks around the sales floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~The salespeople may give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But ~~be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than necessary!

It takes time to learn to prune your own writing. But practice makes perfect. As you revise, see if you can spot digressions.

Problem #2: Conciseness

> Sometimes writers use too many words ~~when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose in a given piece of writing~~.

The sentence above is much clearer without the crossed out words and the meaning is the same. Our goal is not simply to make sentences shorter; it's to make them stronger.

Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft.

- Sentences that begin with "There are" or "It is"
  - Wordy: There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.
  - Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments. (move the subject to the front of the sentence)
- Sentences with unnecessary modifiers
  - Wordy: Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the legislation.
  - Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the legislation. ("extremely famous" and "well-known" mean the same thing)
- Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb "to be"
  - Wordy: It can be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
  - Revised: Using a GPS device can benefit drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
- Sentences with round-about phrases
  - Wordy: The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My grandfather bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.

- Revised: The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. Both my grandparents have bought e-book readers.

Here are some wordy phrases to avoid; use the simpler, clearer option:

Wordy	Concise Replacements
a majority of	most
at this point in time	now
based on the fact that	because
during the course of	during
in connection with	about
in order to	to
in the event that	if
a number of	some/many
at the conclusion of	after
despite the fact that	although
on a daily basis	daily
so as to	to
prior to	before
take into consideration	consider
until such time as	until

George Orwell, a perceptive and deliberate writer, once wrote, "Never use a long word where a short one will do." Student writers often think fancier words are better just because they are fancy. They aren't.

Fancy Words	Plain Replacements
accompany	go with
accomplish	do
advise	tell

Fancy Words	Plain Replacements
attempt	try
benefit	help
demonstrate	show
due to	because of
finalize	end/finish
furnish	provide, give
initiate	begin
perform	do
utilize	use

Problem #3: Appropriateness

College essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation and should be accessible and appropriate for any reader.

- Avoid slang and language that is overly casual. Write about "men," "women," and "children" rather than "girls," "guys," and "kids."
- Avoid contractions. Contractions such as "can't" and "aren't" are considered casual speech.
- Avoid clichés. Overused expressions such as "rule of thumb" or "skill set" have been used so often they are empty of meaning.
- Use specific rather than overly general words. Find concrete synonyms for "thing," "nice," "bad," "interesting," and other such words.
- Use nonsexist language. Replace male-gender words with non-gender words when possible ("chair" instead of "chairman," "police officers" instead of "policemen"). Alternate "he" and "she" or use genderless plurals like "they."
- When referring to people with disabilities, put the person first ("a woman who is blind" rather than "a blind woman"). A disability is something a person has, not what a person is.

Thorough and detailed revision is what differentiates weak writing from strong writing. Professional writers know this and dedicate the majority of their time to revising.

How long should you spend on revising? As long as you can. This step can take longer than all the other steps combined.

Exercise 1

Revise your essay. Polish it, prune it, make it clearer and stronger.

Then, cut-and-paste the introductory paragraph from your first draft and the introductory paragraph from this revised draft into a Word document to submit to the instructor. In a few sentences, explain the changes you made.

Remember that a revision is not simply the first draft with a few mechanical corrections. There should be obvious differences in content, organization, and clarity between the two versions.

Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process when you improve your draft.
- A polished essay is clearly organized and concisely worded.
- Revision takes time.

7.5 Correcting the Final

Preview

This section of Ch. 7 will cover the following topics:

- editing for mechanics (grammar, usage, punctuation, formatting)
- using peer editing and tutors for feedback

Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they notice misspellings. They look past your sentences to get to your ideas, unless the sentences are awkward and poorly constructed. They do not cheer when you use "there," "their," and "they're" correctly, but they notice when you do not. Readers (including classmates, teachers, bosses, and customers) are impressed by an error-free document.

While some essays are more clever, more informed, or more persuasive than others, anyone can produce an error-free document if they spend enough time editing. The chapters of this book on word use, parts of speech, sentences, punctuation, and capitalization will help you eliminate mechanical errors in your writing. Track which topics you master and keep working on the ones that challenge you. Don't hesitate to ask for help from your instructor or MHCC tutors.

Step 5: Editing

The final step after revising content is editing. When you edit, you examine the mechanical parts of the paper: spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and formatting. **The goal of editing is correctness.**

Do not begin editing until you are sure the content is complete. Then, do your first round of edits on the computer so you can fix problems as you go. Always do a final read-through on the printed page; you will see things that you miss on the computer.

Look for problems you know you have, as well as the following common errors:

- Check capitalization and punctuation, especially commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and italics.
- Use words correctly. Avoid clichés and generalizations. A void words like "aspect," "amount," "things," "interesting," and "flow"; they are vague and often used incorrectly. Don't use "you."
- Be sure sentences are complete, no run-ons or fragments.
- Look for common grammar problems, including parallel structure, pronoun use, subject/verb agreement, misplaced or dangling modifiers, and verb tense inconsistency.
- Run a spellcheck, but be sure it hasn't overlooked words.
- Double-check that you have formatted the document correctly (see Ch. 7.3).

Tip

Use the spell checker on your computer. It will catch most of your misspellings.

Turn off the grammar checker and automatic fill functions on your computer. They are wrong about half the time.

Proofreading

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to miss a mistake. Wait at least a day after you have finished revising to proofread. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward (the last paragraph, then the one before that, and so on) so they can concentrate on mechanics rather than being distracted by content. Another helpful technique is to read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

Proofreading takes time, but the benefits can be seen in the quality of your work, the response of your readers, and the grade you earn.

Getting Feedback

After working closely with a piece of writing, we need to step back and show our work to someone who can give us an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses. Every professional writer does this. Every student writer would benefit from doing this. Getting feedback is your opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience. The best feedback for college students is from tutors and classmates.

Using Tutors

The best time to get help from a tutor is...any time. Tutors can help with challenges along the way or by providing final feedback before you submit work for a grade. They can help you spot, understand, and fix grammar or mechanical problems. They can provide suggestions on clarity and organization.

What tutors won't do is fix your paper for you. Don't expect that. But they will help you fix your own paper. One of the best gifts you can give yourself is to take advantage of tutoring support.

Peer Editing

A college instructor rarely has time to go over drafts in detail with students. Your mom and your best friend aren't going to say anything bad. Even a tutor is only going to give you one opinion. But a small group of students who are working on (maybe struggling with) the same assignment, learning the same information, and as invested as you are in succeeding is a perfect group to give helpful feedback.

How many peer editors do you need? Three or four is plenty. Fewer, and you will have a hard time separating subjective reactions from objective advice. More, and you will just get duplicate information.

"Peer editing" is more than just asking someone for feedback. You should trade papers with your peers and edit their work as they edit yours. Trading papers has a hidden benefit: the best way to become a good editor of your own writing is to practice editing someone else's work. It is much easier to see problems in someone else's writing and your editing "muscles" get exercised and trained. You will learn almost as much from doing a peer edit as you will from getting one.

Remember that the purpose of peer editing is to receive constructive criticism, not just compliments. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, it gets easier and the value is immeasurable.

Becoming a good editor does not happen spontaneously, but the more you do it, the better you get. Our initial tendency may be to say only what is wrong with a piece of writing, to praise it excessively, to remain silent, to argue every point, or to say what we think the writer wants to hear. Try to avoid those pitfalls.

The following guidelines will help you become a better editor and a better writer.

First, as the writer

The version of your essay that you share for feedback should be what you think is a finished document. When you give your essay to a reader for editing, you are saying, "I think I am done. Do you see any problems I have missed?" Giving an unpolished draft to a reader is lazy; you are basically saying, "Will you finish my assignment for me?"

When you give your work to an editor, don't apologize for how bad or unworthy it is. (If it's that bad, it isn't ready for peer editing.) Don't explain your intention; it should be clear. In fact, it can be helpful to ask your peer editor to tell you what they think your intention is. You may ask an editor to pay particular attention to something that has caused you problems. Otherwise, just say, "Thank you" and let go.

Then, as a reader

- Be respectful. Don't criticize in a way that makes a writer feel stupid. Believe in the possibilities of the essay. Avoid sweeping judgments ("this is good," "this is bad"); if you can't say why, the writer won't know what to do. Give specific input ("I can't find the thesis," "The transitions were easy to follow.") Avoid the word "you"; talk about the essay, not the writer.
- Write on the essay. In fact, write all over it!
- Read the essay at least twice. The first time, get familiar with the topic and note mechanical errors. Then, go over the essay a second time. Look deeper. Consider organization, clarity, and writing quality. Note anything that confuses you, interests you, or bores you.
- If your instructor has provided a grading rubric, use it as a guideline for which areas to check.
- Here are some questions you could answer, but don't hesitate to offer anything that seems useful.
    - Is the formatting correct?
    - Is the title interesting?
    - Is the introductory paragraph engaging and does it indicate the direction of the essay?
    - Is the thesis clear and specific?
    - Does the body of the essay develop and support the main idea?
    - Are transitions clear?
    - Does the essay include extra, unnecessary material, or is more detail needed? If so, where?
    - Does the conclusion feel meaningful?
- Finally, answer these two questions. Every writer needs to hear something good, but nobody has ever produced a perfect document on a first try.

Tip

These steps for editing the work of another person can also be used by you on your own work.

- What one thing most needs to be improved in this essay?
- What one thing did you like best or remember most clearly?

We won't be doing peer editing as a class, but you are encouraged, invited, and applauded if you want to set up a peer editing group on your own.

After Feedback

After your essay has been critiqued, whether by a tutor or peer editors, read the input you receive.

- If the mechanical suggestions are correct, make those changes. Always double check; do not simply take an editor's word for a grammar or punctuation rule!
- Decide which suggestions on the content will improve your essay and which will not. Incorporate the ideas you like. If several readers note the same problem, take the advice seriously. However, you are always the final judge about what you do in your own essay.

Exercise 1

Edit your essay. Correct any mechanical or formatting errors, and make any changes you want based on feedback you received. Submit the final draft for grading.

Now Am I Done?

The writing process is "recursive." That means you can repeat steps at any point if you need to do so. If you start drafting and realize your thesis needs to be clearer, go back and work on Step 2 again. If you are in the middle of revising and think a

paragraph needs more detail, do a quick prewrite to see what other details you can discover.

When should you consider your essay finished? Donald Murray wrote this in "The Maker's Eye":

> "A piece of writing is never finished. It is delivered to a deadline."

The best writers always have an urge to keep tinkering. If you give yourself enough time to work through this process, however, you WILL reach a point where you have a good product, and you will do so before the assignment is due.

Takeaways

- Editing is a skill that improves with practice.
- Using feedback requires you to be open to input but also able to identify what will help you achieve your purpose.
- If you use this writing process, your final document will be much better than it would have been otherwise.

CHAPTER 8: READINGS

8.1 Example Essays

8.1 Example Essays

Preview

This chapter provides links to example essays from both professional and student writers.

Reading excellent writers is not just entertaining or informative. It also introduces you to new styles, vocabulary, and structures. Analyzing what you read expands your own writing skills. Reading good writing is also the easiest way to become a better writer.

Professional Essay Examples

These essays by published writers demonstrate the skills necessary to write well. I will refer to them when we talk about writing and reading, and we will use them in several assignments.

> "How to Mark a Book" by Mortimer Adler is a great little essay with simple instructions for how to learn the most from what you read. It is available at https://stevenson.ucsc.edu/academics/stevenson-college-core-courses/how-to-mark-a-book-1.pdf
>
> "I Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar. Here's Why" by Karl Wiens. This essay was published in the *Harvard Business Review*, where big employers get information, and is available at https://hbr.org/2012/07/i-wont-hire-people-who-use-poo.
>
> "The Maker's Eye" by Donald M. Murray is about the revision process.

It might be comforting to know that professional writers spend a lot of time revising. The essay is available through the MHCC library database in Academic Search Complete at https://login.ezp.mhcc.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid,url,uid&custid=s3707448&db=a9h&AN=1075085&site=ehost-live

Student Example Essays

These essays were all written by students at Mt. Hood Community College–students just like you.

This first essay was written in WR115 by Pablo Medina. The assigned subject was "Mt. Hood Community College." He narrowed the subject to an appropriate size and stayed focused throughout the essay. He provides three examples of why his thesis is true, with each example more important than the previous one (emphatic order). His thesis is clearly stated in the introduction, his body paragraphs each have a topic sentence and specific details, and the conclusion is relevant without being repetitive. https://saintsmhcc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/monteveg_mhcc_edu/EWnShSZ6lolHn_QRNYUbgcwBF7gEIBxmlN4oryx_pTIbJQ?e=kojj1U

This essay by Jennifer Steimer was written for WR121. She deals with the same topic as Pablo, but in a more complex way. She used a chronological structure to organize the essay, then revised and edited to correct mechanical errors. One thing that makes the essay excellent is the quality of her details. https://saintsmhcc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/monteveg_mhcc_edu/EfOf3Uyo Kv9KvX_voBNVIgIBLnCt2KzsnCLSy-IMVGKhZxA?e=NVVIr1

This essay by Brittany McLoughlin is another example of how specific detail makes an essay come alive. Her thesis is the last sentence in the introduction. Her body paragraphs all begin with topic sentences. Notice how she comes back to her original image of the butterflies in the conclusion, but she isn't just repeating what she already said: she is expanding

upon it. https://saintsmhcc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/monteveg_mhcc_edu/EcpacGGkDj1ArJZX07-ltZ0BCxu3WMIsJqnE0yK-LxJiY2A?e=O0GOW7

This last essay by Angela Godfrey is another great example of organization and detail. Her concluding paragraph is especially good. Like all the other writers, Angela went over and over her essay–first on her own, then in a peer editing group, then again on her own–until she was confident it had no grammar or usage errors. https://saintsmhcc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/monteveg_mhcc_edu/Ec05SQKpiRJIjmHM-L6NMCABvZx9gpTRp-BLIQYGDa7ZEow?e=0DKP07

Tip

When you log in to an essay, consider printing it out. Why?

- Some sites limit the number of times you can access materials on their site before they require you to subscribe. Often a subscription is free, but sometimes it is not. If you log in to check out an essay, then log in again later to read it, then log in again to check something, you may find the site won't let you back in.
- But more importantly, understanding and retention are both increased when readers make notes on a document rather than to try to remember what they thought about the reading.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH

Formatting Research

Formatting Research

Preview

This appendix will cover the following topics:

- citing research
- avoiding **plagiarism**

Writing college assignments that includes research poses multiple challenges. One of the main issues is how to use materials ethically. This appendix focuses on how to format citations and avoid plagiarism.

Whether you quote, summarize or paraphrase, research must **always** be **cited**. "Citing" means formatting the information so it can't be mistaken for your ideas.

Citing involves three components: a Works Cited page, signal phrases, and in-text citations.

Works Cited Page

A Works Cited page is an alphabetical list of the "**works**" you refer to in your paper, with the necessary information to find the source. When producing a research paper, write the Works Cited page **first**; the information that goes into signal phrases and in-text citations is based on the entries on the Works Cited page.

Writing a citation is like learning a code. Doing it correctly is crucial because oth-

erwise the code can't be translated accurately. The challenge is that each different kind of source is formatted differently.

There are tons of things you need to know about what goes into a citation and how to decipher it. Nobody has all of the rules of formatting citations memorized. To format citations correctly, students need a reference book. I recommend the following:

- *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, if you want an actual book. It is cheap, easy to use, and accurate. Get the newest edition.
- The Purdue University Online Writing Lab at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue.owl.html if you want an online resource. It is free, easy to use, and accurate.

Tip

Learn to do citations by hand rather than relying on automatic citation formatting programs.

Why? Because citation formatting programs make mistakes.

Here is what a basic citation looks like:

> Adler, Mortimer. "How to Mark a Book." *Mercury Reader*, edited by Gay Monteverde, Pearson, 2015, pp. 3-7.

Because the above citation is correctly formatted, I can translate it correctly. I know the item is an essay published in a book; it is in print, not electronic; the author is Mortimer Adler; the editor of the anthology is Gay Monteverde; the publisher of the book is Pearson; it was published in 2015; and the essay appears on pages 3-7. I know all this because of the way the information is presented.

Here is an example of a detailed Works Cited page:

Ruiz 8

Works Cited

"The 2016 Pirelli Calendar by Annie Leibovitz | Behind The Scenes." *YouTube,* 30 Nov. 2015, youtu.be/daS7qxLY9r0.

"Annie Leibovitz." *Newsmakers,* 1998. *Gale In Context: Biography,* link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1618000122/BIC?u=mthoodcc&sid=BIC&xid=5f5a3fe.

Brannan, Beverly. "Story of "Migrant Mother" Photograph by Dorothea Lange – American Artifacts." *C-Span,* 26 Oct. 2016, www.c-span.org/video/?309557-1/discussion-color-photographs-1930s-1940s.

"Dorothea Lange Biography." *Biography.com,* 12 Apr. 2019, www.biography.com /artist/dorothea-lange.

"Dorothea Lange." *Encyclopedia of World Biography Online,* 1998. *Gale In Context: Biography,* link.gale.com/apps/doc/K1631003776/BIC?u=mthoodcc&sid=BIC&xid=990f8830.

Lange, Dorothea. *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California.* March 1936. *MoMA,* www.moma.org/collection/works/50989.

Leibovitz, Annie. *Yoko Ono; John Lennon.* 1980. *National Portrait Gallery,* www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw09608/Yoko-Ono-John-Lennon.

Mendelsohn, Meredith. "The Government Photographer Who Gave a Face to American Poverty." *CNN Style,* 17 July 2018, www.cnn.com/style/article/dorothea-lange-politics-of-seeing/index.html.

"Portrait." *Lexico.com,* Oxford University Press, 2019, www.lexico.com/en/definition/portrait.

But a Works Cited page can also be just one entry, if you only used one source.

It takes a while to learn to do citations. Use a manual and go slowly.

Using Signal Phrases

A signal phrase introduces a quote, summary or paraphrase. For example:

> According to Mortimer Adler, "There are three kinds of book owners."

"According to Mortimer Adler" is a signal phrase. It signals that the following information is from research. If you don't tell readers that information comes from research, they might assume that the ideas or words are yours. That is **plagiarism** (see below).

Although the usual place for a signal phrase is before the referenced information, signal phrases can appear in the middle or at the end too. A signal phrase is necessary whether quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing.

> People who own books, Adler explains, come in three types.

> "There are three kinds of books owners," Mortimer Adler claims.

Using In-text Citations

In-text citations are a brief note at the end of a quote, summary, or paraphrase that refers the reader to the full citation on the Works Cited page. Here is an example:

> According to Mortimer Adler, "There are three kinds of book owners" (4).

That number "4" in parentheses at the end of the quote is the in-text citation. Using the signal phrase and the in-text citation, your reader can turn to the Works Cited page, find "Adler" there, and know that the quote is on page 4 of the document listed.

An in-text citation is necessary for summaries and paraphrases as well as quotes. For example:

> People who own books, Adler explains, come in three types (4).

The in-text citation is placed at the end of the sentence, not the end of the quote:

> "There are three kinds of books owners," Mortimer Adler claims (4).

Note that the in-text citation comes before the end punctuation.

If the author listed on the Works Cited page is named in the signal phrase, as above, the in-text citation just includes a page number. If the author is not named, the in-text citation needs to include his name as well. For example:

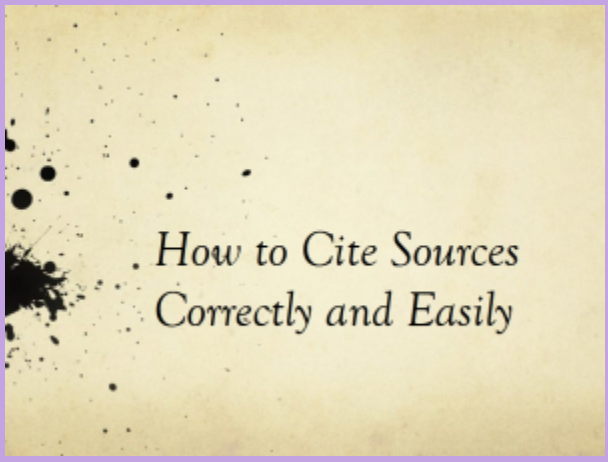
> I found this statement particularly interesting: "There are three kinds of book owners" (Adler 4).

As above, the period at the end of the sentence comes after the in-text citation.

Graphics

This PowerPoint reviews some of the information above and introduces further details about citing. Click on the image to view it.

(Note: You can download this PowerPoint to your computer for future reference by opening the PowerPoint, going to file, and clicking Save As.)



A Word About Plagiarism:

Don't.

Students must give credit to the source of borrowed words and ideas, whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased. If you need help understanding how to use sources ethically and effectively, talk to a teacher, a librarian, or a tutor.

But if your position about plagiarism is "Everybody else does it," or "Who cares?" or "I'm in a hurry," consider this:

- Plagiarism is cheating. It robs a student of an opportunity to learn and creates unfairness in grading.
- Plagiarism is stealing. It is the same thing as breaking into someone's house and taking their stereo or grabbing an old lady's purse on the street.
- Plagiarism is actually illegal. (See the Oregon Revised Statute 165.114). Many people have ended up in court, paying lots of money for plagiarizing the words or works of others. People who do not end up in court often lose their jobs and their reputations. College students can fail an assignment or an entire class.

Plagiarism is defined by our college as "the act of stealing ideas, passages, or writing of others and using them as one's own, without acknowledgement or documentation...Common instances of plagiarism include such practices as 'copying and pasting' information from online sources, copying sentences from another student's paper, turning in papers written by someone else, failing to credit the source of ideas, and incorrectly treating specialized information gained from sources as knowledge so widely held that it requires no documentation."

Avoiding plagiarism is simple: Everything in the papers you write should either come from your own head or be cited.

Takeaways

- There is more to writing a research paper than citations, but knowing how to create a citation is a crucial skill.
- A Works Cited page lists all the reference material used in a research paper.
- Quotes, summaries and paraphrases must be formatted using signal phrases and in-text citations.
- Plagiarism is unethical and can have dire consequences. Don't do it.

Glossary

adjective

a word used to describe a noun or pronoun

adverb

a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb

annotate

add notes to, comment on

antecedent

a word the pronoun refers to

antonym

a word that means the opposite of another word

article

a specific type of adjective; there are three articles in English: "the," "a," and "an."

articulate

express an idea fluently and coherently

avid

interested, enthusiastic

barbarous

uncivilized, discordant, harsh

brackets

a pair of marks, like square parentheses [ ], that enclose words or numbers to separate them from the rest of a sentence

chronological

according to time

cited

to identify the source of an idea or phrase

clause

a group of words that includes both a subject and a verb

cliché

an overused or unoriginal word or phrase

comma splice

when a comma is used incorrectly between two independent clauses

compound noun

a noun made up of more than one word

comprehension

the act of understanding

concisely

briefly

condense

shorten

conjunction

a word that joins or connects

connotation

ideas or feelings generated by a word that go beyond its literal meaning

consonant

any letter other than a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y

contraction

a word created by combining two words, deleting some letters, and adding an apostrophe

criteria

the standard or model used for comparison

dependent clause

a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but is dependent on the rest of the sentence to finish the thought

digression

a departure or a shift from the main point

document

record evidence

draft

the preliminary or early version of a document

edit

correct errors

ellipses

a set of three periods . . . that means words have been removed

emphatic

based on importance

essay

a short, subjective piece of writing that analyzes or interprets a topic

expository

a type of writing that investigates, evaluates, and explains an idea or topic

format

arrangement on the page

fragment

an incomplete sentence, missing a subject, a verb, and/or a complete thought

generate

create

glossary

a list of words and their meanings

govern

control

grammar

the system and structure of a language

homonym

words that sound like each other but have different meanings

independent clause

a group of words that includes a subject, a verb, and a complete thought

integrate

combine with other information

interjection

a word inserted into a sentence to express surprise or emotion

irregular

different from other, more common forms

isolate

separate, remove from the context

literal

actual

misplaced modifier

a phrase or clause that is awkwardly placed in a sentence so that it seems to refer to an unintended word

modify

add information to

noun

the name of a person, place, thing, or idea

object

a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun affected by the action of the verb

paraphrased

to rewrite something in your own words but without changing the meaning

parentheses

rounded brackets (like this), used to mark off or separate out words or phrases in a sentence

parts of speech

the system used to classify English words based on what they do in a sentence

past tense

a verb form that expresses an action which took place in the past

phrase

a groups of words that does not include the sentence subject or verb

Plagiarism

taking someone else's idea or words and presenting them as if they were yours

possessive

words that show ownership

predicate

the part of the sentence that contains the verb and that tells what happened to the subject or what state the subject is in

preposition

a word that describes the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and something else in the sentence

prepositional phrase

a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun

procrastinate

delay or postpone

pronoun

a word used in place of a noun

proofreading

examining writing carefully to find and correct mechanical errors such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typing errors

purposeful

not accidentally or randomly, but with a goal

revise

re-examine for clarity and quality

run-on

two or more independent clauses merged together with insufficient punctuation between them

sentence

a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought

spatial

as arranged in space

strategy

plan of action

subject

the main noun or pronoun which performs the action in a sentence

summarize

a brief statement of the main points of a longer work

synonym

a word or phrase that means exactly or almost exactly the same thing as another word or phrase

thesis

a brief statement of the essay's main point

unethical

lacking moral principles

verb

a word that expresses action or a state of being

verb phrase

a verb comprised of two or more words

verb tense

the form of the verb that tells us when the action is occurring

vowel

the letters a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y

works

something done or made