Masterguide to Academic Essays and Rhetoric

Definitions and Terms

What Is an Academic Essay?

The purpose of the academic essay is to communicate your researched and objective views of a topic to a specific audience. It has the following features:

- A group of paragraphs organized into three sections: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.
- A thesis statement that communicates the writer's message to a specified audience
- Formal, academic style, usually including Third-Person, Objective Point-of-View (POV)
- Sound Critical thinking and logic.
- Revised, edited, and proofread.
- A balance of rhetoric using the Rhetorical Triangle to conceptualize the relationship of the text, the author, and the audience.

Steps in the Writing Process

The writing process is composed of 5 steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. These steps are considered recursive: they repeat and do not necessarily follow a strict chronological order. For example, writers might prewrite at any step in the process, and they can also revise at any stage. With that said, though, the order above is the most logical order for the overall writing project.

Prewriting

Purpose:

- Invention and exploration of ideas without the constraints of formal writing.
- Clearing the mind and generating a wealth of thoughts on a topic.
- Organizing information by grouping related ideas and eliminating irrelevant ones.

Usage:

- Choose techniques based on personal preference and the specific task at hand.
- Experiment with different strategies to discover what works best for you.

Common Types:

- **Brainstorming:** Rapidly jotting down ideas in a list format (5 minutes).
- **Clustering:** Visual mapping of ideas with branches connecting related concepts.
- **Freewriting:** Uninterrupted writing for 10-15 minutes, capturing all thoughts without filtering.
- **Journalism Questions:** Answering who, what, where, when, why, and how questions about the topic.

Additional Resources:

- For examples of brainstorming, clustering, and freewriting, visit: http://amysaundersauthor.com/2008/10/28/brainstorm-away-with-these-three-fun-techniques/
- For an example of the 5 W's journalism questions, visit: https://lassalle-tech.wikispaces.com/file/view/5ws.pdf/397877974/5ws.pdf

Drafting

Purpose:

The drafting stage helps writers complete their paper by:

- **Transform Ideas:** Drafting helps writers take ideas from prewriting and turn them into a structured, coherent essay.
- **Meet Requirements:** Writers must check instructions along to way to ensure the essay meets the assignment's specific criteria and objectives.
- **Build a Foundation:** The first completed draft provides the basis for the final paper, but it will need further refinement through revision.
- **Identify Gaps:** Writers will discover areas that need additional work through research or development.
- **Establish Flow:** Drafts allow writers to play around with different organizational structures and transitions to ensure the final draft suits their audience the best.
- **Solidify Arguments:** Writers continue to develop and refine supporting evidence for the thesis statement.
- **Prepare for Revision:** Drafting covers multiple versions of the essay, so each lay the groundwork for future revision and improvement.
- **Gain Perspective:** By putting words on in an organized and focused draft, writers can better see the essay as a whole and evaluate its overall effectiveness.

Drafting Stages:

Most essay units require a minimum of four drafts if writers want to present the best draft possible. Those are:

- **Rough Draft:** The initial, imperfect version of the essay.
- **Revision Draft:** At least one revised draft that focuses on improving ideas, organization, and clarity.
- **Editing Draft:** At least one drafts focused on grammar, mechanics, and style after revisions are complete. I suggest for writers who struggle with grammar/mechanics that they have one editing draft for language use and one for MLA.
- **Final Draft:** The polished essay submitted for evaluation.

Goal of Drafting:

- To create a complete first draft that meets the assignment requirements.
- To flesh out ideas and complete necessary research.

Planning and Organizing:

- **Prewriting Stage:** Organize prewriting information, identify common threads, and develop a working thesis.
- **Drafting Stage:** Create a tentative outline based on the working thesis.
- **Outline:** Helps organize ideas, anticipate obstacles, and shape a coherent essay.

Obstacles and Solutions:

- **Lack of reader knowledge:** Provide background information or context.
- **Opposing opinions:** Acknowledge counterarguments and refute them with evidence.
- **Different education levels:** Tailor language and style to the audience.
- **Difficulty finding evidence:** Conduct thorough research and consider adjusting the argument if necessary.

Key Takeaways:

- Drafting involves multiple stages of refinement.
- Planning and organization are crucial for addressing potential obstacles and creating a well-structured essay.

This is where the formal writing and research happens. There are four general types of drafts. They are:

1. **Rough draft:** This is the first version of the paper. It is rough since it will still need revising and editing.
2. **Revision draft:** This is any draft after the rough draft but before the submission draft. Here, the writer works on making the paper better. They consider improving the ideas, examples, order of information, purpose, and audience. Writers also make sure they have followed the assignment correctly.
3. **Editing draft:** This comes after revision drafts (one or more). We only edit after we have revised and have decided that any future changes in our ideas will probably not happen or will be minor. Editing work that might change drastically is not efficient, so we wait until then. Editing involves grammar, mechanics, documentation, style, diction, and tone.
4. **Final draft:** This is the draft we submit for a grade. It should be as perfect as possible.

The goal of the drafting stage is to create the finished first essay draft. Ideally, all the parts of the essay should be here, and all of the assignment requirements should be met. However, that does not mean the essay is complete or will not need significant work. Writers may end up with a skeletal draft – just the most basic elements done with lots of fleshing out left to do. Often, research is incomplete but enough is finished to justify the writer's position on the subject. In this section, we will explore the distinct parts of the academic essay that must be accounted for in a final draft.

Planning and Organizing

- Planning is an important part of writing that happens at every stage in the writing process.

Prewriting Stage: After prewriting, writers need to organize that information in order to find common threads and ideas they can then develop into the essay. This information also helps writers decide on a working thesis[1] for the essay.

Drafting Stage: Before drafting but after deciding on a working thesis, writers can use planning and organizing to create a tentative outline of the essay. This does not have to be a formal outline unless the teacher requires students to submit one as part of the planning stage. However, a scratch outline can help writers organize ideas for the most impact and create writing goals. Knowing where each idea is leading to can help writers shape and focus information more coherently for the reader. It is imperative to understand that the most important planning can only come after writers have a working thesis statement.

When writers have a roadmap of their essays, they can also better prepare for any obstacles to their positions that they might face and/or that readers might have. Obstacles can present themselves in several ways:

- **Lack of basic knowledge:** the reader has insufficient background information to fully appreciate or understand the author's point.
- **Different opinion about topic:** the reader has an opposing position and may strongly disagree with the author or challenge the author's evidence and reasoning.
- **Different education level than author:** the reader may not have the same vocabulary or educational background as the author, so the author must modify his diction and style to suit his audience.
- **Difficulty finding evidence:** the author may not find or have trouble finding the facts and examples he needs to prove his position on the topic.

Revising

Writing is messy, so one draft is not going to produce a writer's best effort. That is why writers produce multiple drafts before submitting their work. Revision is where the writer works on making the paper better. They consider improving the ideas, examples, order of information, purpose, and audience. Writers also make sure they have followed the assignment correctly. Here are general tips for revising.

Take a Break:

- Step away from your essay for at least a few hours, or even a day or two. This gives you fresh eyes for the next steps.

Re-Read with a Critical Eye:

- Read your essay aloud. This helps you hear the flow of your sentences and catch awkward phrasing.
- As you read, ask yourself:
    - Does my essay answer the prompt fully and clearly?

[1] The thesis (discussed in more depth later) is where the writer expresses the purpose of the essay.

  - Is my thesis statement strong and does my essay support it?
  - Does the essay flow logically from one idea to the next?
  - Are my sentences clear and easy to understand?

Consider Big Picture Issues:

- Focus on the overall structure and organization:
  - Does each paragraph have a clear main point?
  - Are the paragraphs in the most logical order?
  - Are transitions between paragraphs smooth and clear?
  - Can I add, remove, or rearrange any sections to make the essay stronger?

Get Feedback:

- Ask a trusted friend, classmate, professor, or writing tutor to read your essay.
- Ask them for specific feedback on:
  - Clarity of your ideas
  - Organization and flow
  - Strength of your arguments
  - Word choice and sentence structure

Repeat:

- Revision is often an iterative process. Go through these steps multiple times to refine your essay.

Additional Tips:

- Do not be afraid to make substantial changes. Sometimes, cutting out a whole paragraph or rewriting a section can make a huge improvement.
- Start revising early. Give yourself plenty of time to revise thoroughly before the deadline.
- Visit your college's writing center. Many schools offer free tutoring and feedback on essays.
- Take advantage of online resources. There are many websites and tools that can help with grammar, style, and citations.

Remember, revision is where your essay truly comes to life. It is your chance to refine your ideas, strengthen your arguments, and make your writing shine.

Editing and Proofreading

Revising, editing, and proofreading are similar, but revision focuses on the ideas and logic of your paper. It is the step where you make sure you have included all aspects of the assignment. Editing and Proofreading, though, generally deal with how you have presented that information. You can edit during revision, and revise during editing, but your main focus should be the purpose of each step in the process.

Here are some tips on editing and proofreading to make sure your writing has clarity, accuracy, and proper academic style.

Sentence-Level Review:

- **Conciseness:** Eliminate wordiness and redundancies. (e.g., change "due to the fact that" to "because")
- **Clarity:** Ensure each sentence conveys a single, clear idea. Break up long, complex sentences.
- **Active Voice:** Use active voice for stronger, more direct writing. (e.g., "The ball was thrown by the pitcher" to "The pitcher threw the ball")
- **Variety:** Vary sentence structure and length to avoid monotony.
- **Word Choice:** Replace weak verbs with strong, specific ones. Avoid clichés and overly casual language.

Transitions and Flow:

- **Smooth Transitions:** Ensure sentences and paragraphs flow logically from one to the next. Use transitional words and phrases (e.g., "however," "therefore," "in addition")
- **Cohesion:** Check that each sentence relates to the overall topic of the paragraph and the essay's thesis.
- **Parallelism:** Use parallel structure for lists or items in a series to improve readability. (e.g., "She likes hiking, swimming, and biking" instead of "She likes hiking, to swim, and to bike")

Tone and Style:

- **Formality:** Maintain an appropriate level of formality for academic writing. Avoid slang, contractions, and overly casual expressions.
- **Consistency:** Ensure the tone and style are consistent throughout the essay.
- **Audience:** Consider your professor's expectations and the purpose of the assignment when adjusting your tone.

Proofreading (Catching Errors):

The final stage in the writing process is proofreading, where writers take a last look at their paper before submitting it. Here, writers primarily check for small errors that they missed in the previous step.

Mechanics:

- **Grammar:** Check for subject-verb agreement, correct verb tenses, pronoun usage, and other grammatical errors.
- **Spelling:** Use a spell checker and carefully read to catch typos and misspelled words.
- **Punctuation:** Double-check commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, and other punctuation marks.

Formatting:

- **Citations:** Ensure all sources are cited correctly according to the required citation style (e.g., MLA, APA).
- **Page Layout:** Check for margins, line spacing, font size, and other formatting requirements specified by your professor.
- **Headers/Footers:** Verify page numbers and any required headers or footers.

Additional Tips:

- **Read Aloud:** Reading your essay aloud can help you catch errors that your eyes might miss.
- **Print It Out:** Sometimes, seeing your essay on paper can reveal errors more easily.
- **Take Breaks:** Proofreading can be tiring, so take breaks to maintain focus.
- **Peer Review:** Ask a friend, classmate, or tutor to review your essay for errors.
- **Online Tools:** Utilize online grammar and spell checkers but remember they are not foolproof.

Parts of the Essay: First Steps

Now that we have covered the writing process, let us look at the specific parts of an academic essay. It is important to understand that essays generally have the same parts, but writers can organize and analyze information in different ways. Still, no matter if it is cause and effect or comparison contrast, the academic essay will always have these standard parts.

The four most crucial elements to identify before you begin drafting your essay are audience, purpose, thesis, and context.

The Audience

Knowing who your audience is determines the depth of explanation and example you provide as well as the language you use to express yourself. It also helps set the parameters for the discussion.

Audience Analysis:

This analysis involves multiple steps and techniques, but as you get used to them, you will find yourself automatically adjusting all of them as you start building a clear picture of who you are writing for.

- **Questions:** Ask yourself who your target readers are, what do they believe, what is their education level, religious and political affiliations, what prior contact do they have with this issue? The teacher is rarely your audience in college classrooms. We are your evaluators but not the group that you are writing to necessarily.
- **Targeting:** You must identify and target a specific audience - know enough about them to make important decisions concerning vocabulary, background information provided, types of examples to use, sources to stay away from, and which rhetorical appeal to use.

Though your paper may be of interest to many people, you want to define who the **ideal audience** is for your thesis and make decisions based on that group.

- **Vocabulary:** what is your audience's education level? What words will appeal to them or turn them off? For example, if I have a conservative audience and I label something liberal, I will probably distance that audience. Instead, I need to find another way to describe it that will not get a knee-jerk reaction.
- **Background info to provide:** What does your audience already know about this issue? What do they **NEED** to know to be able to understand the argument you are making? Be sure you provide **only necessary relevant** info - do not stuff your introduction, or your essay, with trivial facts or biographical information that does nothing to further your argument.

Purpose

Purpose refers to the reason you are writing about your chosen topic to your ideal audience. There are two levels of purpose: general and specific.

General Purpose

There are four standard reasons for writing:

1. To entertain
2. To create literary works
3. To inform
4. To persuade

In this class, we will focus on the last two: inform and persuade.

- **Informative writing** means you are presenting the reader with facts, explanations, and evidence without taking a stance on the issue or asking the reader to make a change.
- **Persuasive writing** takes everything you do in an informative piece but adds an argument to it: you are trying to persuade the reader to act in some way.

Most papers we write in this class will be persuasive in nature.

Specific Purpose

Writers must have personal reasons for writing, and that is what the specific purpose identifies. Why do you want your reader to know this information? Why is it important that you share your thoughts about it?

The Thesis

Definition:

- The central, overarching point of your essay.
- All topic sentences in the body should stem from and support the thesis.

Three Parts of a Thesis:

- Subject: The main topic of your essay.

- Action/Attitude: What you will say/argue about the subject and/or what you want the reader to do.
- Essay Map: A preview of the main points that will support your argument.

Example Thesis:

- Community gardening programs benefit those living in urban settings because they help build healthy minds, bodies, and relationships.
    - Subject: Gardening
    - Attitude: Benefits urban residents
    - Primary support: improves mind, body, and relationships.
    - Audience: People unfamiliar with the need for and benefits of community gardens in the city.

Thesis Statements Are NOT:

- Statements of fact: "SSC raised tuition this year."
- Statements of the obvious: "Students do not like paying tuition."
- Announcements of intent: "This essay will explain how SSC uses tuition money."

Narrowing the Subject:

- A strong thesis has a focused subject appropriate for the essay's length.
- Prewriting techniques help narrow down broad topics.
- Example: From "tuition costs" to "recent hikes in tuition at SSC."

Stating the Attitude/Action:

- Determine your stance or argument before finalizing the thesis.
- Attitude is influenced by the essay type (informative, argumentative, etc.).

Examples of Thesis Statements with Attitude:

- America’s widespread adoption of electric vehicles is essential for combating climate change due to their zero tailpipe emissions, the expanding charging infrastructure, and the decreasing cost of batteries.
- Congress should implement universal basic income to significantly alleviate poverty by providing a financial safety net, promoting economic stability, and fostering greater social equality.
- Educators should incorporate mindfulness practices into school curricula to increase student well-being because it reduces stress and anxiety, improves emotional regulation skills, and fosters a positive learning environment.

Now the author has a complete thesis to use in the essay.

Extended Example: The Thesis

For the discussion of essay parts, we will use the following as an example thesis: To avoid being defrauded, people should learn to identify the most common types of propaganda used in advertising: testimonial, card stacking, and glittering generalities.

Context

In discovering audience, purpose, and thesis, writers must determine the relevant contexts.

Definition:

Context relates to limiting factors you decide on that help you focus your essay. Joseph Moxley defines it as "the occasion, or situation, that informs the reader about why a document was written and how it was written. The way writers shape their texts is dramatically influenced by their context. Writers decide how to shape their sentences by considering their contexts."

Since we do not argue topics in a vacuum, we must connect them to something the audience will see as relevant. That could include considerations such as time, place, and ideology. For example, a discussion of tuition hikes at Harvard will not likely be interesting to an SSC audience. However, if the writer connects what is happening at Harvard to changes in Oklahoma higher education, then suddenly that tuition hike is relevant and more interesting.

Types

Time

- When something happened can be a relevant and essential context for some papers.
- No one should write "since the beginning of time" or "since the first human appeared" because that is simply too large a period to cover, and no one knows what was really going on then.
- Limit topics by choosing specific time contexts. Example: A discussion of civil liberties in America would be vastly different if I choose to look at the 1990s as opposed to the post-9/11 era.

Audience

- The target reader also provides limiting contexts, such as age, income, politics, health, ethnicity, religion, and more.
- Example: The 1st Amendment guarantees religious freedom to all citizens. If I want to argue that Christians should support a certain law because it aligns with their religious values as evidenced in the Bible, I could only do so logically if I narrow my audience to Christians, such as Southern Baptists.

Purpose

- Why the author is writing also determines some decisions writers make.
- General Purpose: Setting up an informative or persuasive essay requires different elements.
- Specific Purpose: A writer's motivation for choosing this topic will also focus their discussion on areas that intersect with their experience and interests.

Setting

- Place may also be essential to an essay. Writers should consider the basic categories of setting and how they could help focus their paper:

- Specific: An actual place, such as Kelli's dorm room at ECU. I could write a paper that talks specifically about my experiences living in the dorm as an undergrad and what my room was like. We have to question why we would focus on one person's experience. This would only be suitable for a narration essay or as a specific example in a body paragraph.
- General: A broader location, such as dorms at ECU. This would look more broadly at the quality of dorms at ECU rather than just 1 student's experience. This would be a useful context if someone wanted to discuss the problems with dorms. Trying to talk about all dorms, even in OK, would be impossible, so narrowing it to a specific location would be better. Here, it might even be wiser to narrow it to not all ECU dorms but a specific one, such as Pontotoc Hall.
- Geographic: a region, such as dorms in Oklahoma. This would focus on what dorms are like in Oklahoma. We would have to ask ourselves if that even makes sense. What would make Oklahoma dorms significant enough to narrow it by region. If the state has certain laws that require all college dorms meet certain standards, and this is not typical of other states, then that would be logical.

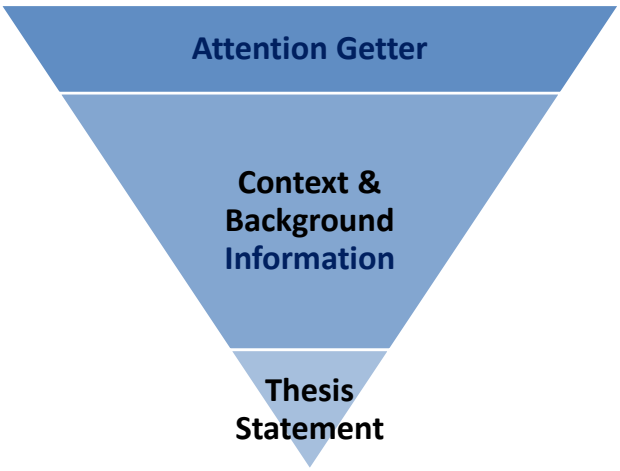
Style

In a college composition class, you have two general style contexts.

- The first is the language level. All of your essays must follow standard Academic English. You will not choose an audience that cannot read or understand on a level below the collegiate.
- The second is documentation and layout. We only use the Modern Language Association (MLA) 9th edition style manual for this class. Papers using others, such as APA, will face deductions that might lead to a failing grade.

Context will be different for every essay.

Parts of the Essay: The Introduction



Attention Getter:

- Broadest level that grabs the reader's interest.
- Relevant to the essay's subject and tone.

Background Information/Context:

- Provides historical context, current relevance, and personal connection for the reader.
- Explains the need for discussion and why the issue is debatable.

Thesis Statement:

- Most specific level, the writer's claim or argument.
- Placed at the end of the introduction, closest to the body paragraphs.
- Builds upon the information provided in the attention getter and context.

Intro as Blueprint:

- Outlines the essay's structure and content.
- Indicates the method of organization (e.g., comparison/contrast).
- Ensures all announced topics are covered in the essay.
- Should be revised at the end of the writing process to accurately reflect the final content.

Intro as Blueprint

Often, the introduction acts as a blueprint for the paper, which lets the reader know what is to come and the order in which you will arrange the information.

- You will also indicate your method of organization, such as comparison/contrast.
- Whatever you announce in the introduction, you must cover it in the essay. Be sure your introduction at the end of the writing process reflects exactly what you have ended up writing about.[2]

Attention Getters: Hooking Your Reader

Why Attention Getters Matter

- **First Impressions:** The introduction sets the tone for your entire essay.
- **Engagement:** A strong hook makes the reader want to continue.
- **Relevance:** It connects the reader to your topic.

Attention Getters That Work

- **The Intriguing Question:**
  - "Have you ever wondered why...?"
  - "What if...?"
- **The Startling Statistic:**

[2] For more information about writing Introductions, including examples of good intros and bad intros, read the University of North Carolina's handout on introductions.

    - "90% of people underestimate the impact of..."
    - "In the last decade, the rate of X has doubled."
- **The Vivid Anecdote:**
    - A brief story that illustrates the essay's central theme.
- **The Powerful Quote:**
    - From a relevant expert, historical figure, or literary work.
- **The Contrast:**
    - “We are on the verge of a revolution in..."
    - "The conventional wisdom is wrong."

An Intriguing Question

- **Definition:** A thought-provoking question that engages the reader and encourages them to consider the essay's topic from a different perspective. Avoid questions with obvious answers.
- **Example:** "If you could travel back in time and change one decision in your life, would you? And what might the consequences be?"
- **How It Works:** This question invites the reader to reflect on the concept of choice and consequence, setting the stage for an essay on personal responsibility and the butterfly effect.

A Startling Fact or Statistic

- **Definition:** A surprising or unexpected piece of data or information that grabs the reader's attention and piques their curiosity. It should be relevant to your topic and highlight its significance.
- **Example:** "According to the World Health Organization, over 800,000 people die by suicide each year. This staggering number underscores the urgent need for greater mental health awareness and support."
- **How It Works:** This statistic immediately draws attention to the severity of the issue and emphasizes the importance of the essay's topic.

The Vivid Anecdote

- **Definition:** A short, personal story that is rich in detail and evokes emotion in the reader. It should be relevant to your essay's topic and draw the reader into your world.
- **Example:** "The icy wind howled as I huddled beneath a flimsy tarp, shivering uncontrollably. Just hours earlier, I had been confidently setting out on my first solo backpacking trip, certain of my wilderness skills. Now, lost and alone in the darkness, I wondered if I would ever see the sunrise."
- **How It Works:** This anecdote sets the stage for an essay on the importance of humility and preparedness in nature.

The Powerful Quote

- **Definition:** A thought-provoking statement from a respected figure or relevant source. The quote should resonate with your essay's theme and offer a unique perspective.

- **Example:** "As Maya Angelou wisely said, 'There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.' This sentiment captures the driving force behind my decision to finally speak out about my experiences with bullying."
- **How It Works:** This quote sets a powerful tone for an essay on overcoming personal struggles and finding one's voice.

The Contrast Statement

- **Definition:** Highlighting a dramatic shift or transformation to emphasize personal growth or change. It presents a "before" and "after" picture, creating intrigue.
- **Example:** "The timid girl who once hid behind her textbooks, afraid to raise her hand in class, is now the editor-in-chief of the school newspaper, leading a team of aspiring journalists."
- **How It Works:** This contrast showcases the author's journey of overcoming shyness and embracing leadership.

Attention Grabbers to Avoid

- **The Overused Cliché:**
  - "In today's society..."
  - "Since the beginning of time..."
- **The Dictionary Definition:**
  - "According to Merriam-Webster, X is defined as..."
- **The Vague Generalization:**
  - "Everyone knows that..."
  - "Many people believe..."
- **The Irrelevant Question:**
  - A question that has no real connection to the essay's topic.
- **The Long, Rambling Introduction:**
  - Get to the point quickly.

Choosing the Right Hook

- **Consider Your Audience:** Who are you writing for?
- **Match Your Tone:** Is your essay serious, persuasive, humorous?
- **Connect to Your Thesis:** The hook should lead naturally into your main argument.
- **Be Original:** Avoid clichés and predictable approaches.

Crafting the Perfect Hook

- **Brainstorm:** Generate several options before choosing one.
- **Revise:** Don't be afraid to rework your hook until it's just right.
- **Get Feedback:** Ask someone to read your introduction and give their opinion.

Why It's Worth the Effort

- A well-crafted attention getter can make the difference between an essay that's read and one that's skimmed.
- Take the time to find the perfect hook, and your readers will be hooked from the start!

Background Information: The Role of Background Information

What is Background Information?

- Contextual details relevant to your topic
- Definitions of key terms or concepts
- Brief overview of relevant research or theories
- Historical context or current events (if applicable)

Why is Background Information Important?

- Provides context for your thesis statement.
- Orients the reader to your topic.
- Establishes your credibility as a writer.
- Helps the reader understand the significance of your argument.

Qualities of Effective Background Information (RACE)

- **Relevant:** Directly connected to your thesis statement
- **Accurate:** Based on credible sources and research
- **Concise:** Avoid unnecessary details or tangents
- **Engaging:** Written in a clear and interesting style

How to Incorporate Background Information

- Start with a broad overview and narrow your focus.
- Use transitional phrases to connect ideas.
- Consider the knowledge level of your audience.
- Avoid overwhelming the reader with too much information.

Extended Example: The Introduction

America is a country of consumers. People buy products on a scale unlike anywhere else in the world. America also has the highest personal debt rates in the world as well. So many people are drowning under credit card and loan debts, but it does not stop them from purchasing more things, many that they do not need. Because people love to buy, many unscrupulous companies target uninformed consumers and prey on their need to be thinner, healthier, sexier, and happier. They do so through propaganda. It is not just a tool for politicians and dictators. Propaganda, or the art of persuading someone to do something, is a crucial aspect of sales. Some use it to promote worthy causes, like raising money to help feed children, but others use it out of greed. Though the government and consumer watch groups work hard to alert consumers about scams, too many people do not know where to find this information or that it even exists. With so many products, it is impossible to be educated about all fraud. That does not mean that people are defenseless. If they took the time to learn about propaganda techniques, they could more easily detect suspicious claims by these advertisers. This could be daunting since propaganda comes in many forms but narrowing the list down can be an important start. To avoid being defrauded, people should learn to identify the most common types of propaganda used in advertising: testimonial, card stacking, and glittering generalities.

More Information

For more information about introductions, , including examples of good and bad ones, read UNC's handout at https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/introductions/

Parts of the Essay: The Body

Definition

Purpose:

- Present supporting evidence to prove the thesis statement.
- Develop and expand on the essay's central theme.

Topic Sentences:

- Each body paragraph must have a clear topic sentence.
- Academic essays typically require at least two body paragraphs, each with a distinct topic sentence.
- Minimum of three body paragraphs for class assignments unless otherwise specified.

Unity:

- Each body paragraph should focus on one main idea, expressed in the topic sentence.
- Avoid discussing multiple points within a single paragraph to maintain clarity and focus.

MEAT Structure:

- M: Main point (topic sentence)
- E: Evidence (explanation and examples)
- A: Analysis (interpretation and significance of the evidence)
- T: Transitions (smoothly connect ideas within and between paragraphs)

M Is for Main Point

Definition:

- The main point of a paragraph, announcing the topic and the author's perspective on it.

Purpose:

- Drive the body of the essay.
- Connect to and support the thesis statement.
- Prepare readers for the conclusions and recommendations in the conclusion paragraph.

Content:

- Express the author's reasoning and argument.
- Should not be a quote or summary from another source.
- Quotes and summaries belong elsewhere in the body paragraph as evidence or context.

Location:

- Typically placed as the first sentence of a body paragraph.

Parts of the Topic Sentence

Structure:

- Similar to a thesis statement, but narrower in scope.
- Covers one specific point within the broader essay topic.

Topic:

- A word or phrase that the author has narrowed down for focused discussion.
- Found through prewriting techniques like brainstorming, freewriting, and clustering.

Topic Sentence Attitude:

- A clear statement of purpose, combining the topic with the writer's perspective or argument.
- Avoids simply announcing a topic without conveying an attitude or point of view.

Examples:

- Bad Example: The first problem is not enough money to buy books. (Unclear topic/attitude)
- Good Example: The proposed tuition hike will leave many students unable to buy required textbooks. (Clear topic and negative attitude towards the tuition hike)

Extended Example: Adding Topic Sentences

Sample Thesis: To avoid being defrauded, people should learn to identify the most common types of propaganda used in advertising: testimonial, card stacking, and glittering generalities.

- Topic Sentence 1: One common type of propaganda used to sell products is testimonial.
- Topic Sentence 2: Another popular but misleading advertising tactic is card stacking.
- Topic Sentence 3: Perhaps the most common type of false advertising is glittering generalities.

E Is for EVIDENCE (Explanation and Example)

Purpose:

- To develop and support the thesis statement.
- To demonstrate the writer's reasoning behind their argument.

Explanation through Definition:

- Define any specialized or ambiguous terms used in the essay.
- Use credible sources (class materials, research) for definitions.
- Avoid defining common knowledge terms.

Use of Examples:

- Provide illustrations that clarify and support the writer's points.
- Choose examples appropriate to the level of research and specificity required by the assignment.
- Examples can range from specific research-based examples to generic and typical examples based on common knowledge.

Key Takeaway:

- Body paragraphs use a combination of explanation and evidence to develop and support the thesis statement.
- Definitions and examples are crucial tools for making arguments clear and persuasive.

The 3 Basic Types of Examples

Purpose of Examples:

- Clarify abstract ideas and make them more concrete.
- Demonstrate the real-world implications of an argument.
- Help readers "see" the issue in action.
- Provide objective support for your interpretation of a concept.

Specific Example:

Uses precise details and facts about a real event.

- Strength: Provides concrete evidence and verifiable information.
- Weakness: May be limited to a single occurrence and lack broader applicability.
- Example: "Because the law does not require specific oversight for law enforcement officials, the sheriff of Chaney county illegally used his authority to have prisoners renovate his house."

Typical Example:

Describes a common or widespread pattern or occurrence.

- Strength: Demonstrates the prevalence of an issue.
- Weakness: May lack specific details and be less persuasive as a result.
- Example: "Because the law does not require specific oversight for law enforcement officials, many officers in higher ranking positions misuse their authority for personal profit."

Hypothetical Example:

Presents a possible scenario or outcome to illustrate a point.

- Strength: Can help explain cause-and-effect relationships and explore potential consequences.
- Weakness: Relies on speculation rather than facts and can be susceptible to logical fallacies.

- Example: "Because the law does not require specific oversight for law enforcement officials, a sheriff could misuse his authority to personally profit. For example, a sheriff could use free prison labor on personal projects."

The Perfect Mix

When developing an argument, the perfect use of examples involves mixing typical and specific. You first explain what typically happens and then you follow it up with a specific example from research to prove your point.

- **Example:** Because the law does not require specific oversight for law enforcement officials, many officers in higher ranking positions misuse their authority for personal profit. One recent event in Oklahoma is typical of how this happens. According to the *Chaney News Beacon*, investigators discovered that Chaney County Sheriff Millard Brothers illegally used his authority to have prisoners renovate his house. Brothers falsified work orders that showed prisoners taking care of county property, and instead had them transported to his personal property. Over the course of two years, the prisoners built a boat dock, added a bonus room to the sheriff's house, and even tended the garden for Brothers' wife. The labor costs involved totaled more than $37,000 (Newton 1).

Academic Constraints on Examples: Balancing Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

Objective Evidence (Logos):

- Academic writing relies on verifiable evidence outside the writer's personal experience.
- Research from credible sources is essential to establish logos and persuade readers.

Building Credibility (Ethos):

- Readers won't automatically trust your words.
- Personal examples are often seen as weak in academic writing unless you've established expertise in the topic or the assignment calls for using personal experience.
- Building ethos through credible sources and sound reasoning is crucial.

Making the Issue Real (Pathos):

- Examples can connect with the reader on an emotional level.
- They can make abstract issues more relatable and urgent.
- However, excessive or irrelevant emotional appeals can be counterproductive or manipulative.

Key Takeaway:

- Effective academic writing balances logos, ethos, and pathos.
- Prioritize objective evidence and credible sources while using emotional appeals judiciously.
- Avoid manipulative tactics that rely solely on emotions without sound reasoning.

Using Examples as Evidence in Your Essay

- **Purpose:** To support your claim (thesis) with concrete evidence.

- **Types of Evidence:**
  - **References:** Quotes or summaries from the text itself (primary source).
  - **Research:** Findings that support your argument and its connection to your target group (often secondary sources).
- **When to Use:**
  - **References:** Always use when analyzing a primary source (e.g., a journal article, novel, poem, play).
  - **Research:** Use when your argument needs additional support beyond the primary source.
- **Documentation:**
  - **MLA Format:** Always use MLA format to cite any source you use (quotes, summaries, or paraphrases).
  - **Consequences:** Failure to cite sources properly can result in a failing grade.
- **Key Takeaway:** Strong evidence is crucial for a persuasive essay. Use examples from both the text and research to back up your claims.

Extended Example: Adding Explanation and Example

Body Paragraph 1: One common type of propaganda used to sell products is testimonial. This technique uses famous people to endorse something. Companies gamble that the celebrity's appeal to consumers will make them trust his/her word. They might also purchase that item because they want to be like that celebrity. One category of advertisements that rely on testimonial is weight loss. The Nutrisystem corporation uses famous athletes and pop icons, like actors and TV personalities Jillian Barberi and Marie Osmond, to convince people to buy their products. Commercials usually involve a before and after shot of the celebrity, and their assurance that people can eat meals that are delicious and easy to prepare.

A Is for Analysis

The analysis section is the last part of the body paragraph.

Purpose:

- Ties together the evidence presented in the paragraph.
- Logically demonstrates how the evidence supports the topic sentence and thesis.
- Explains the significance of the evidence and why it matters to the reader.

Explanation:

- While the entire body paragraph involves analysis, the analytic summary is the final, crucial step.
- It connects the dots for the reader, ensuring they understand the implications of the evidence.
- It goes beyond simply presenting evidence to explain its meaning and relevance.

Types of Analysis:

- **General:** Basic explanation of the evidence's connection to the main argument.
- **Evaluate:** Assesses the value or effectiveness of different choices or approaches.

- **Synthesize:** Combines ideas to create new insights or perspectives.

Key Takeaway:

- The analysis is essential for guiding the reader's understanding and reinforcing the overall argument of the essay.

Extended Example: Adding Analysis

Body Paragraph 1: One common type of propaganda used to sell products is testimonial. This technique uses famous people to endorse something. Companies gamble that the celebrity's appeal to consumers will make them trust his/her word. They might also purchase that item because they want to be like that celebrity. One category of advertisements that rely on testimonial is weight loss. The Nutrisystem corporation uses famous athletes and pop icons, like actors and TV personalities Jillian Barberi and Marie Osmond, to convince people to buy their products. Commercials usually involve a before and after shot of the celebrity and their assurance that people can eat meals that are delicious and easy to prepare. The propaganda aspect is obvious: anyone who recognizes and likes these celebrities will be more likely to believe them. However, too many who fall for this ploy do not consider that these people have the money and time to go to the gym, hire personal trainers, and afford the steep price tag for the system. They also might not realize that in addition to buying Nutrisystem's food, they also have to supplement with fresh fruits and vegetables. All they see is someone who lost weight, and they trust that it is because of Nutrisystem. For example, in one Nutrisystem ad featuring Jillian Barberi who lost 41 pounds, investigators revealed that she was pregnant in her before shot and hired a personal trainer to help her get fit (Kovalchik). Marie Osmond, also a Nutrisystem spokesperson, claims the program is responsible for her weight loss, but the whole truth is that "she also joined the Choose to Move program. And then she landed a spot-on *Dancing with the Stars*, which she admitted required six hour per day workouts for several months that left her breathless and dripping with perspiration" (Kovalchik). The company gets away with these endorsements by printing disclaimers in very small print at the bottom of the ads, which usually appear for just a few seconds. Everything might be legal, but it is hardly ethical or honest.

T Is for Transitions

Transitions are connecting words or phrases that help the reader see the relationship between parts of the paragraph and essay. You simply do not list these elements in order. It is up to you to provide the coherence and unity through transitions that logically guide your reader through your reasoning.

Types of Transitions:

- **Coordinating Conjunctions: and**, but, or, nor, for, so, yet
    - Example: "The evidence suggests a strong correlation, yet further research is needed to confirm causality."
- **Subordinating Conjunctions:** because, although, since, while, if
    - Example: "Although the initial results were promising, the long-term effects remain uncertain."

- **Conjunctive Adverbs**: however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless
    - Example: "The data supports this hypothesis; moreover, it suggests additional avenues for investigation."
- **Repetition of Key Words or Phrases:**
    - Example: "The concept of sustainability is complex and multifaceted. Sustainability requires..."

Common Transition Patterns:

- **Cause and Effect:** therefore, as a result, consequently
- **Comparison:** similarly, likewise, in the same way
- **Contrast:** however, on the other hand, in contrast

Purpose of Transitions:

- **Logic:** Show the relationship between ideas and create a logical flow of thought.
- **Clarity:** Make the meaning of your writing clear and easy to follow.
- **Coherence:** Tie together different parts of the essay into a unified whole.
- **Smoothness:** Create a seamless reading experience by avoiding abrupt shifts.

Additional Resource:

- UNC Writing Center Handout on Transitions: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/transitions/

Extended Example's Use of Transitions, Audience, and Context

Transitions

(Transitional devices are underlined)

America is a country of consumers. People buy products on a scale unlike anywhere else in the world. America also has the highest personal debt rates in the world as well. So many people are drowning under credit card and loan debts, but it does not stop them from purchasing more things, many that they do not need. Because people love to buy, many unscrupulous companies target uninformed consumers and prey on their need to be thinner, healthier, sexier, and happier. They do so through propaganda. It is not just a tool for politicians and dictators. Propaganda, or the art of persuading someone to do something, is a crucial aspect of sales. Some use it to promote worthy causes, like raising money to help feed children, but others use it out of greed. Though the government and consumer watch groups work hard to alert consumers to scams, too many people do not know where to find this information or that it even exists. With so many products, it is impossible to be educated about all fraud. That does not mean that people are defenseless. If they took the time to learn about propaganda techniques, they could more easily detect suspicious claims by these advertisers. This could be daunting since propaganda comes in many forms but narrowing the list down can be an important start. To avoid being defrauded, people should learn to identify the most common types of propaganda used in advertising: testimonial, card stacking, and glittering generalities.

One common type of propaganda used to sell products is testimonial. This technique uses famous people to endorse something. Companies gamble that the celebrity's appeal to

consumers will make them trust his/her word. They might also purchase that item because they want to be like that celebrity. One category of advertisements that rely on testimonial is weight loss. The Nutrisystem corporation uses famous athletes and pop icons, like Terry Bradshaw and Marie Osmond, to convince people to buy their products. Commercials usually involve a before and after shot of the celebrity and their assurance that people can eat meals that are delicious and easy to prepare. The propaganda aspect is obvious: anyone who recognizes and likes these celebrities will be more likely to believe them. However, too many who fall for this ploy do not consider that these people have the money and time to go to the gym, hire personal trainers, and afford the steep price tag for the system. They also might not realize that in addition to buying Nutrisystem's food, they also have to supplement with fresh fruits and vegetables. All they see is someone who lost weight, and they trust that it is because of Nutrisystem. For example, in one Nutrisystem ad featuring Jillian Barberi who lost 41 pounds, investigators revealed that she was pregnant in her before shot and hired a personal trainer to help her get fit (Kovalchik). Marie Osmond, also a Nutrisystem spokesperson, claims the program is responsible for her weight loss, but the whole truth is that "she also joined the Choose to Move program. And then she landed a spot-on *Dancing with the Stars*, which she admitted required six hour per day workouts for several months that left her breathless and dripping with perspiration" (Kovalchik). The company gets away with these endorsements by printing disclaimers in very small print at the bottom of the ads, which usually appear for just a few seconds. Everything might be legal, but it is hardly ethical or honest.

Audience

- **Introduction:** The introduction often reveals the target audience. In the example, the audience is identified as American consumers with limited knowledge of propaganda techniques.
- **Age Range:** The audience is narrowed down to those old enough to read the essay and make purchases.
- **Additional Considerations:** Other demographic factors like gender, political preference, religion, sexual orientation, or financial status may not be relevant in this case. The writer could further narrow the audience based on these factors if necessary for their argument.
- **Key Takeaways:** Identifying the target audience is crucial for tailoring the essay's language, tone, and arguments. The introduction often provides clues about the intended audience. Consider which demographic factors are relevant to the topic and purpose of your essay.

Context/Purpose

- **Purpose:** Clearly states the writer's intention or goal.
- **Context:** Provides background information or relevant circumstances.
- **Example:**
    - Purpose: To educate readers about propaganda techniques used in advertising.
    - Context: Current advertising practices targeting uninformed consumers.
- **Key Takeaway:** The introduction sets the stage, informing the reader why the topic matters and what the writer aims to achieve.

Concluding/Summary Sentence

Purpose:

- Wrap up the author's point in the paragraph.
- May summarize the material or prompt reader action/reflection.
- Not always necessary, but crucial for clarity and impact.

When to Use:

- Longer paragraphs with complex arguments often benefit from a concluding sentence.
- Use your judgment – avoid repetition or stating the obvious.

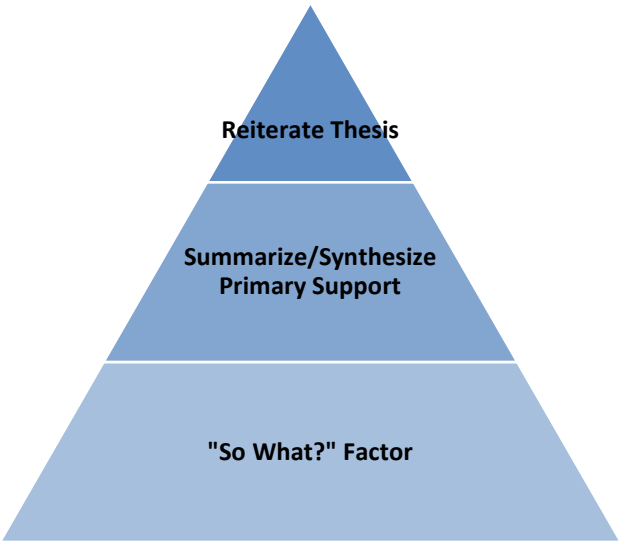
What to Avoid:

- Using the topic sentence of your next paragraph as the concluding sentence here.

Key Takeaway:

- The goal is to ensure the reader understands the significance of your argument and is smoothly guided to the next point.

Parts of the Essay: The Conclusion



The Art of the Essay Conclusion

What is a Conclusion?

This is the last thing your reader sees, so ending with a strong impression is important. It's not just a summary of what you've already said. It's an opportunity to:

- **Reiterate:** Remind the reader of your central argument (thesis).
- **Synthesize:** Tie together your main ideas in a cohesive way that shows how they work together to prove your thesis.

- **Offer Final Thoughts:** Share insights or perspectives that go beyond simply restating your arguments but instead clearly ties your essay to the readers' lives and interests.

What Makes a Good Conclusion?

- **Clear:** It restates or paraphrases the thesis in fresh words, avoiding repetition.
- **Concise:** It gets to the point without dragging on.
- **Powerful:** It leaves the reader with something to think about.
- **Recursive:** It links back to the introduction, creating a sense of unity and balance.

How Long Should a Conclusion Be?

The conclusion is often shorter than other paragraphs, but it doesn't have to be. Writers shouldn't look for a magic number of words or sentences. Instead, they should focus on developing each part and providing a compelling finish to their paper by offering reflective statements that inspires readers to act. The goal is to change the reader's mind and not to meet some arbitrary number. However, most paragraphs for a standard essay should be somewhere between 150-250 words.

Why Do You Need a Conclusion?

- **Closure:** It wraps up your essay and provides a sense of completion.
- **Reinforcement:** It drives home your key points one last time.
- **Significance:** It explains why your topic matters and what your analysis adds to the conversation.
- **Reader Satisfaction:** A strong conclusion leaves the reader feeling satisfied and informed.

Steps to Crafting an Effective Conclusion

Restate Your Thesis: Rephrase your main argument, highlighting its significance. Since the reader has more information about the issue than they did in the introduction, you cannot simply repeat the original thesis. You have to modify it to reflect the reader's new understanding of your argument.

Summarize Key Points: Briefly touch on the main supporting ideas without repeating yourself. Do not list your topics. Instead go beyond summary and synthesize the ideas to show how they work to prove your point. You might do this by providing a:

- **Broader Perspective:** Connect your topic to a larger issue or theme.
- **Call to Action:** Encourage the reader to think further, research more, or act.

Provocative Thought: End with a thought-provoking question or statement.

Tie It Back to the Intro: Echo a phrase, question, or image from the beginning to create a full-circle effect.

So-What Factor: All of these possible choices should support the purpose of showing the reader why they should care. This answers the question from the reader, “So what? Why should I bother?”

Things to Avoid in Your Conclusion

- Don't introduce any new arguments or evidence.
- Make sure your conclusion aligns with rather than contradicts what you've said in the essay.
- Avoid phrases like "I may be wrong, but..."
- Steer clear of clichés like "in conclusion" or "to sum up."

Examples of Effective Techniques

- Echo: "Just as the first settlers faced hardship and uncertainty, we too must find ways to adapt and thrive in a changing world." (echoing a historical reference from the intro)
- Call to Action: "By understanding the impact of social media on our mental health, we can make informed decisions about how we engage with these platforms."
- Provocative Thought: "The future of artificial intelligence is uncertain, but one thing is clear: it will fundamentally change the way we live and work."

Why Your Conclusion Matters

Your conclusion is the last chance to make your mark. It's the final taste the reader has of your essay, so make it memorable. By crafting a strong conclusion, you ensure that your ideas resonate with the reader long after they've finished reading.

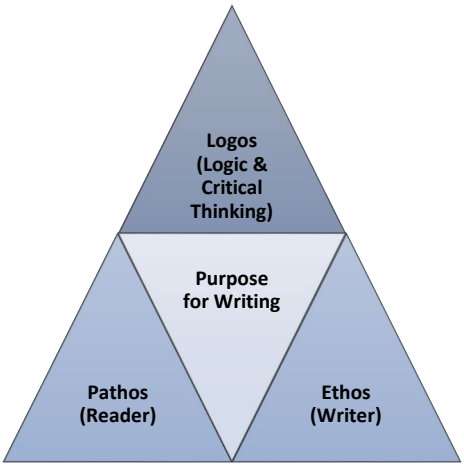
Extended Example: Conclusion

Though looking at the propaganda techniques of testimonial, card stacking, and glittering generalities is just an introduction to the manipulative ways advertising tries to defraud consumers, this provides a solid foundation to help American consumers protect their family and finances from unscrupulous businesses. These campaigns come at Americans from the TV, radio, newspaper, and the Internet. With more people accessing information on social media, such as Facebook, the need for critical awareness of how scammers work is even more urgent today because too many online sites are ad-driven, meaning the owner earns money by placing ads on his/her pages. Unfortunately, fewer regulations govern the claims Internet advertisers make. Considering how many people struggle making ends meet today, being able to detect false claims in advertising is a vital skill for those living paycheck to paycheck. One disastrous choice could seriously harm a family’s solvency. Until the government can provide better protections against these con artists, people must become more responsible consumers by learning how to spot propaganda.

More Information

For more information about writing Conclusions, including examples of good and bad ones, read the University of North Carolina’s handout on conclusions at http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/

The Rhetorical Triangle



Purpose:

- A framework for understanding the relationships between the text, author, and audience in academic writing.

Origin:

- Derived from Classical Greek rhetoric.
- Aristotle's "On Rhetoric" identified logos, pathos, and ethos as the most persuasive appeals.

The Three Appeals:

Text/Logos (Reason):

- Common sense, facts, figures, objective data.
- Appeals to logic and reason through credible research and objective language.
- Preferred appeal in academic writing.
- Types of Logos:
    - Primary sources: The original work being analyzed or interpreted. (e.g., Plato's Republic)
    - Secondary sources: Works written about the primary source or related topic (e.g., books, articles on Hamlet).
    - General reference works: (*Wikipedia*, dictionaries, encyclopedias) are generally not considered academic sources due to potential issues with credibility, timeliness, and target audience.

Author/Ethos (Credibility):

- The writer's character, authority, and trustworthiness.
- Established through expertise, qualifications, and fair representation of opposing views.

- Important for gaining the audience's trust and confidence.
- Achieved through:
    - Tone: Appropriate to the subject and audience.
    - Presentation: Proper grammar, mechanics, and style.
    - Evidence: Using credible and relevant sources.
    - Documentation: Accurate citation of all evidence.
    - Honesty: Acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses of your argument and opposing views.

Audience/Pathos (Emotion):

- Appeal to the audience's emotions and values.
- Used to make the topic relevant and evoke a response.
- The time to use emotion is usually in the introduction, when you need to get the reader's attention and convince them to read further, and in the conclusion, when you are trying to wrap up the essay and want to get the reader to think or act. Often, it is the emotional impact of the issue that can spur action. However, you want to use it sparingly.
- Be careful of insidious pathos: using adjectives to describe people or events: "the unfair and underhanded tactics of the sheriff…" Unless you can back this up with logos to prove that the sheriff acted unfairly and underhandedly (which means looking at procedures and legal requirements), you have just made an emotional appeal, not a logical one.

More Information on Rhetoric:

- http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/resource_rhet.html
- http://www.molloy.edu/sophia/aristotle/rhetoric/rhetoric1a_nts.htm
- http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/webclass/web/project1/group4/index.html#logos
- http://www.rhetorica.net/textbook/

Important Note:

- Misusing rhetorical appeals can lead to propaganda and logical fallacies.

Argumentation

Definition:

Argument as a writing genre does not involve fighting or anger. And unlike debate, it avoids pro-con positions and must make a claim about the topic under discussion. The purpose of argumentative writing is the pursuit of truth, which involves examining multiple sides of an issue and arguing the one with the best solution (Ramage, Bean and Johnson 3).

Arguments Can Be Explicit or Implicit.

When making a claim, the writer can use explicit or implicit reasoning to support his/her position (4).

- Explicit reasoning is direct and depends on clear statements with logical explanations and credible evidence presented to the audience (4). It is heavily weighted with logos.
- Implicit argument is indirect. It persuades by appealing to readers through images, emotions evoked in stories, and implied rhetoric. Both are persuasive and appeal in different ways to the audience (4).
- Think of the implicit messages in these two different images of a woman smoking. Without a single word, these pictures provide a statement on the subject. Consider the following questions when looking at these pictures: What message does each picture convey to the viewer? How would this message change to an audience from the 1920's? The 1950's? Would it still have the same message to a country where smoking is still popular or information about the dangers of smoking is not as widely disseminated?

Argument Requires Justification of Its Claims.

Formal arguments must meet certain criteria.

- There are at least two opposing positions on the issue.
- The purpose of the argument is to find a resolution to the conflict, and this must be a rational resolution.
- The arguer must provide reasons to support his position.
- The arguer must explain his position and offer clarification (Ramage, Bean and Johnson 7-8).

Argument Is Both A Process and A Product.

Argumentation involves negotiation. This is part of the process in which the opposing sides work to resolve the question or problem. The result of this process is called the product. These are what the different sides contribute to the process in an effort to find truth as well as to persuade the other parties. In this back and forth, the opposing parties should keep in mind two questions:

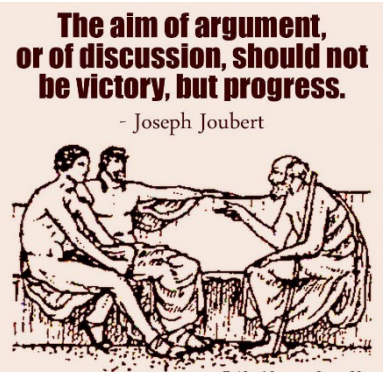
- What is the best solution to the problem at hand?

- What reasons or evidence would best speak to the audience's values? (9-10)

Issue Questions Vs Information Questions

Argument needs to begin with issue questions not information questions.

- **Information Questions**: These questions only present facts. The author is not taking a stand on an issue because there is no dispute or controversy involved. Rational people agree on the information. Since there is no opposition, there can be no argument.
    - Example: What is the average rainfall in Oklahoma during the month of June?
    - This is seeking facts about how much rain occurs in June. It is not taking a position on the issue of rain in June.
- **Issue Questions:** These questions involve controversy or disagreement between rational viewpoints. “Rhetoricians have traditionally distinguished between explication, which is writing that sets out to inform or explain, and argumentation, which sets out to change the reader’s mind.” (Ramage, Bean and Johnson 77).
    - **Example:** Has global warming caused the increased rainfall in Oklahoma in the month of June?
    - This question seeks answers to why something is happening. Because it involves a controversial subject, global warming, any attempt to answer will involve opposing views.
- **Opinion:** Writers need to be sure they do not mistake issues for opinions. People can disagree about things that do not count as issues. They might merely be differences in taste or preference.
    - **Example:** There is too much rain in Oklahoma in June.
    - This is simply a statement of preference. Other people might think there is not enough rain in June, or that it is just right.



Pseudo vs Rational Argument

One of the hallmarks of formal argument is the use of reason. You cannot argue with an irrational person because you will not find common ground or facts. You will usually only find

opinion and propaganda. In these cases, irrational people use pseudo-arguments. These may sound like arguments, but they are not.

Definition:

Argument devolves into pseudo-argument when one or more sides behave fanatically rather than rationally. These arguments are monologues (not dialogues) with the different sides talking at each other not to each other. There is no effort to find any common ground or make progress unless that progress is 100% capitulation by the other side. Fanatics fall into two basic categories: believers and skeptics (Ramage, Bean and Johnson 79).

- **Fanatical Believer:** These people base their arguments on opinion and personal belief rather than facts or objective data. Unfortunately, their beliefs come from a very narrow experience or tunnel vision. For example, someone may argue fiercely for the 2nd Amendment based on tradition and his own use of guns but fail to see that not all people share the same traditions or have the same attitudes (79).
- **Fanatical Skeptic:** These people refuse to believe anything unless there is 100% proof. Since few things have such proof, they use this as a reason to doubt (79).
- **Problem:** When arguing with either type of fanatic, one cannot win because there is no common or objective ground to build on.

Rational Argument:

Participants enter this argument not necessarily to win but to find resolution and truth. That does not mean one side cannot win, especially if the other side's argument is based on propaganda or fallacy. However, most complex questions usually find the truth in the exchange of ideas from diverse groups of people with different views. Any rational argument must have two factors:

- The opposing sides must be reasonable and behave rationally.
- The sides must have some shared assumptions about the issue or each other. This is where diverse groups overlap and can start building consensus and agreement. Rational argument believes that opposing sides can modify views as each person's understanding or view of the issue or the other side grows and changes. They can also begin to see weaknesses in their argument and strengths in the other arguments (79).

Persuasion vs. Argument[3]

The following list compares and contrasts persuasion vs. argument on several critical levels:

- **Claims:**
  - Persuasion: Bases thesis on opinion
  - Argumentation: Begins with opinion or fact and moves through inductive or deductive reasoning to reach a thesis

[3] Adapted from the Vermont Reading Institute handout by Mary Beth Monahan

        - **Inductive:** start with a general observation (you may have little knowledge of subject and have not formed an opinion) and gather evidence to determine if that observation is true. Once you have determined this, you make your claim.
        - **Deductive:** start with a theory (could be opinion) of what you think is true (a working thesis), gather evidence to test the claim, make adjustments, and then state the final claim.
- **Substantiated Claim**
    - Persuasion: Not always present. Instead, could rely on shaky evidence (e.g., Propaganda, Advertisements)
    - Argumentation: Always substantiates position by using Relevant & Sufficient Evidence
- **Pathos**
    - Persuasion: Appeal to Audience Emotion, Desires, Needs. Highly manipulated
    - Argumentation: Minor use of because this appeal is vulnerable to propaganda, illogic, and opinion
- **Logos**
    - Persuasion: Can include some of this appeal to logical reasoning and evidence (e.g., Facts, Examples, Historical and Legal Precedents). Usually depends more on pathos and ethos or takes facts out of context and/or misrepresents whole truth.
    - Argumentation: Appeal to logical reasoning and evidence (e.g., Facts, Examples, Historical and Legal Precedents). Argumentation rests heavily on logos – it is the preferred appeal.
- **Ethos**
    - Persuasion: Appeal to writer's or speaker's character, credentials, trustworthiness. Equally important in both, but it is established differently (personal anecdotes and opinion)
    - Argumentation: Appeal to writer's or speaker's credibility (more so than character); credibility is established through knowledge of subject matter and merits of reasons and factual evidence. Important and relies on traditional means of establishing credibility through presentation, use of sources, etc.
- **Elements of Formal Argumentation**
    - Persuasion: Persuasive texts may make an "argument," but they do not always include elements of a formal argument
    - Argumentation: Include the following elements of Argument:
        - Warrants - shows how evidence supports claim.
        - Backing - (Support for Warrants)
- **Opposing Views**
    - Persuasion: May not take opposing views into account
    - Argumentation: More likely to include opposing views in argument, but most certainly explores them during research when substantiating claims.
        - Counterclaim (Opposing Argument)
        - Rebuttals (Respond to and Try to Refute)

- **Critical Thinking**
  - Persuasion: Usually sacrifices critical thinking for pure opinion or gut instinct.
  - Argumentation: The heart of argumentation is critical thinking – being willing to change your position on a subject if you find evidence that refutes your beliefs, or choosing topics that you are not so emotionally tied to that you are not willing to change your mind when you find evidence.

Five Types of Claims

Once you have identified a topic you are interested in writing about, you now must figure out what claim you want to make. It can help if you understand the five basic categories of claims.

Claim of Definition

- What is the literal/technical meaning of it?
- What does it resemble?
- How should it be classified?
- How should it be interpreted?
- How is different in some contexts?
- **Example:** Inner city definition of gun control vs. suburban or country definition.

Claim of Cause

- What is/are the cause/causes?
- Where did it come from?
- What are the effects?
- What are potential long-term or short-term effects?
- **Example:** The real reason for teen violence is not the proliferation of guns but a lack of adult mentoring and supervision.

Claim of Policy

- What should people do?
- How should people act?
- What is a solution to this problem?
- **Example:** By stopping corporate tax welfare in Oklahoma, the government can make up the deficit in the budget.

Claim of Value

- Is this valuable or worthless?
- Is this not as valuable or less valuable than people think?
- What is its moral value (if any)?

- What is its positive (good) or negative (bad) value?
- Who values or does not value it?
- What values do these people have/not have?
- What criteria should be used to determine value of something?
- **Example:** Second Amendment rights are vital to the continued independence of the American people.

Claim of Fact

- Can we determine that something did happen?
- Can we determine that what happened is real/true?
- Who is verifying that this is a fact?
- How might people verify if something happened or is true?
- **Example:** Those interested in the true state of unemployment in America can find answers by using the Freedom of Information Act.

How to Research

Identify Your Subject.

In some writing situations, the teacher will give you a specific topic or subject to work on. In other writing situations, you may have to find a subject yourself. Generally, try to pick ones that you have some knowledge of before research. This will make your task easier in many ways because you will not be entering the project cold.

Ask A Research Question.

- **Narrow:** You have to narrow the subject and choose a position from which to argue. A good place to start is to look at the 5 types of claims and the questions one asks. These might help you determine the type of argument you want to make and/or narrow the approach you can take to the issue.
- **Focus:** Pinpoint the areas you are most interested in and ask a question about those areas.
    - **Example:** For a paper, I might be curious about the phrase "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" from the Declaration of Independence. Does our government still support those ideals? See, there is a question.
- **Fine Tune:** If my idea is still too broad. I can narrow it further by brainstorming. I would want to define what our Founding Fathers (FF) meant by life, liberty, and happiness. These terms can have vastly different interpretations.
    - **For example,** I might think that the three could involve freedom to choose in areas like euthanasia, abortion, wearing seatbelts/helmets. However, I cannot assume that the FF would lump them under the same heading.

- If I cannot find any evidence that the FF addressed these issues or others similar to them so that I might make a logical extrapolation, then I must look at the evidence I do have. What did they say about personal liberty versus government control in general? I can analyze this evidence and apply it to situations occurring today that did not occur then. I strongly doubt that abortion was a hot topic (though it happened). Nor can we expect tracts on seatbelts or helmets (obviously). But the issues surrounding these specific topics may be present in other cases.

Begin Researching Sources.

Once I have a question in mind and a plan begun, I need to find sources to support my argument (or at least what I think is my argument at this point).

Definition:

Academic or credible sources: any research you bring to a paper that is credible and verifiable, relying on objective, scholarly methods of problem solving, not personal, biased methods.

Staying in control:

However, using secondary sources does not mean letting go of your own ideas just because you are relying on someone else's research or analysis. You must have a personal argument and be able to express that and prove it. Your sources should never replace your own voice and narrative in the paper.

Make a compelling argument:

If you begin researching before formulating a strong question and points to argue, then you are more likely to lose control of your paper. Essays must express your ideas supported by corroborating evidence. This is important because the reader might disagree or doubt your point, but if he/she sees evidence that supports it, the reader will be more inclined to give you benefit of the doubt.

Reasonable Evidence:

In argument, you must provide reasonable, verifiable evidence to back up your points. If you do not, then you will have failed in your purpose. Imagine a lawyer not presenting any evidence in a court case or any data that challenges evidence against her client. If she merely stands before the jury and says, "My client is innocent because he's a good person," how likely is it the jury will be convinced? Even if she says, "My client is innocent because he was sitting in a donut shop in Hoboken at the time of the crime" but does not provide witnesses or anything to verify that, the jury will not put much weight on the statement.

Credibility:

But it is not just about providing evidence. You have to provide credible evidence. We must be able to verify and trust the information you provide. If the lawyer has the client's mother swear he was with her all night but a police officer with no connection to the accused says he saw him running down the street a block from the crime, who are we more likely to believe? More than likely, the jury would believe the police officer because he/she has no reason to lie (that we are

aware of). The family and loved ones of defendants are usually weak witnesses because we think they would lie. The same is true of a witness with a criminal past who has made a deal. So, consider your source!

Where Do I Find Sources?

- Digital Databases: SSC provides access to EBSCO, a database of articles the college subscribes to. This has an up-to-date and large collection of resources. I have created a video as well as a handout with step-by-step instructions in Brightspace's Announcements about how to get to EBSCO and conduct a search.
- Digital Libraries: There are free and subscription-based digital libraries. Many provide all of the services of traditional libraries, just modified for online access.
- Physical Libraries: The more traditional places to find information for research are the periodical index (listing of all articles published a given year), shelves of print sources, and reference resources (dictionaries, encyclopedias, statistics, etc.).

Internet Sources Can Be Dangerous.

- The Internet is a wonderful tool, but it also contains a lot of junk. If you cannot establish the credentials of the source or verify the information, then it is usually best not to use the source.
- Avoid sites that let multiple users edit content with few if any restrictions, like wikis.
- Use content from people who have relevant expertise in the subject they are writing about. That means doing some background searching on authors or organizations.
- Consider how old the information is. For some topics, like medicine and technology, information becomes outdated quickly.

Where to Find Online Sources

- AMDOCS (Documents for the Study of American History): http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/
- Ancient World Online: http://ancientworldonline.blogspot.com/
- Archives of American Art: https://www.aaa.si.edu/
- Artcyclopedia: http://www.artcyclopedia.com/
- arXiv.org (Cornell University, science, and mathematics): https://arxiv.org/
- Behavioral Brain Science Archive: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioral-and-brain-sciences
- Best of History Websites: https://besthistorysites.net/
- Bielefeld Academic Search Engine: https://www.base-search.net/
- Biography.com: http://biography.com
- CIA World Fact Book: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html
- Cities and Buildings Database: https://content.lib.washington.edu/buildingsweb/index.html
- Core (open access research papers): https://core.ac.uk/

- Cornell Law Library: https://www.law.cornell.edu/
- Digital Library of the Commons Repository: http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/
- Digital Public Library of America: https://dp.la/
- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): https://doaj.org/
- EDSITEment (Humanities): https://edsitement.neh.gov/
- Encyclopedia Mythica: https://pantheon.org/
- Encyclopedia of Religion and Society: http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/
- Free Databases (All Subjects): https://csulb.libguides.com/c.php?g=39192&p=249953
- Getty Search Gateway: https://search.getty.edu/gateway/landing
- Google Books: https://books.google.com/?hl=en. Some books offer free previews.
- Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com (If the article requires you sign-in or pay to view it, try searching for it in Ebsco).
- Ibiblio: https://www.ibiblio.org/
- Infotopia: http://www.infotopia.info/
- Inomics (a site for Economists): https://inomics.com/
- Internet History Sourcebooks Project: https://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/index.asp
- Jurn: http://www.jurn.org/#gsc.tab=0 (search 4000+ free academic journals)
- Library of Congress: https://www.loc.gov/
- Free Databases: https://www.library.ucsb.edu/search-research/free-databases
- Luminarium (English Literature): http://www.luminarium.org/
- MLK, Jr. Research and Education Institute: https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/
- Media History Digital Database: https://mediahistoryproject.org/
- Medline Plus: https://medlineplus.gov/
- Microsoft Academic: https://academic.microsoft.com/home
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: https://www.nap.edu/
- National Agricultural Library: https://www.nal.usda.gov/main/
- National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog
- National Bureau of Economic Research: https://www.nber.org/
- National Library of Medicine: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/digitalprojects.html
- National Science Digital Library: https://nsdl.oercommons.org/
- Native Web (Information about Indigenous Peoples): http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/
- Open Library: https://openlibrary.org/
- Perseus Digital Library (Ancient Greece and Rome): http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/
- Petrucci Music Library: https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Political Resources on the Net: https://www.politicalresources.net/
- Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/help/new_website.html
- Public Library of Science: https://plos.org/
- PubMed Central: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/ (healthcare and science)
- Refseek: https://www.refseek.com/
- ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/search

- Science Direct: https://www.sciencedirect.com/
- Science.gov: https://www.science.gov/
- Social Science Research Network: https://www.ssrn.com/index.cfm/en/
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: https://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html
- The History Engine: http://historyengine.richmond.edu/
- The Literary Encyclopedia: https://www.litencyc.com/php/viewpublicshelves.php
- Ubu: Avante-garde material: http://www.ubu.com/
- Universal Digital Library: http://ulib.isri.cmu.edu/
- Virtual Learning Resources Center: http://www.virtuallrc.com/
- Virtual Library Labour History: http://www.iisg.nl/w3vl/
- Voice of the Shuttle (Humanities): http://vos.ucsb.edu/
- World Digital Library: https://www.wdl.org/en/
- Worldcat: https://www.worldcat.org/ (locate resources in local libraries or to buy)
- Worldwide Science: https://worldwidescience.org/
- zbMATH: https://zbmath.org/

TRAAP Test[4]

Use the TRAAP Test to assess your resources. TRAAP is an acronym for Timeliness, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose.

Timeliness: How current is the information? Ask yourself:

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out of date for your topic?
- Are the links functional? (Web only)

Relevance: Does the information fit your needs? Ask yourself:

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e., not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining if this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

Authority: Who is the source of the information? Ask yourself:

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?

[4] Based on The CRAAP Test, created by the Meriam Library at Cal State University (Chico).

- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? (Web only)
  Examples are:
    - .com (commercial), .edu (educational), .gov (U.S. government)
    - .org (nonprofit organization)
    - .net (network)

Accuracy: How dependable, truthful, or correct is the content? Ask yourself:

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

Purpose: Why does the information exist? Ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of the information? to inform? teach? sell? entertain? persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

Take Precise Notes During Research

When you find helpful information, make a note of it, including the complete bibliographical information (author, title, publisher, date, page number).

- You can use note cards or any means that you prefer as long as it is easy to organize.
- Do not rely on memory because memory will let you down.
- If the information is a direct quote from the source, put it in quotation marks, so you will not mistake it for your own words. This will prevent you from accidentally plagiarizing.
- You may also want to make some comments about the context of the information. One of the worst things you can do is to take a quote or information out of context and thus misconstrue the meaning. If I quote an obscure doctor on the efficacy of opium to control epileptic seizures but fail to let my readers know this doctor lived in 1665, then they will assume I am referring to a current physician. See the problem? I might want to prove this theory, but I cannot use deception to do so – this is a fallacy (card stacking).

Be Prepared to Do a Lot of Reading.

To find even a handful of credible sources, you may have to read twenty books or articles. You must start early so you do not run out of time. Problems can arise.

- You may also find that the library does not carry some sources that are crucial to your paper. You will have to interlibrary loan them or go to a library that does have them.

- You may also find that someone has defaced the book or magazine, and the article you need is not there, or that someone has checked it out. Waiting till the last minute is dangerous because you will not have time to find replacement sources.

As for reading, researchers do not read everything they find. We learn to skim the article, index, table of contents, and chapters to determine the relevance of the source to our argument. If we think it could be a usable source, we put that in our "keep" pile and move on to the next potential source on the list. Once we have accumulated a sizable number of items in our keep pile, we sit down and look at them more closely.

- For books, you do not necessarily have to read the entire thing. Sometimes, only one or two chapters will be important to your argument. You should always skim the first and last chapters (or introduction chapter), because these usually give the book's "big picture." Prefaces will sometimes do this, but they are often more dedicatory in nature.
- For articles, try reading the first and last paragraph and the first sentences of each paragraph in between to understand the article's content. This will save you much time and allow you to go through a large pile pretty quickly.

Never Forget Your Purpose.

It is easy to get sidetracked when researching or to even lose focus. If you have to, write down your research question on a note card and keep that handy. Reread it occasionally to keep your mind on target. That does not mean that you cannot change your mind or even your topic, but it will keep you from getting off topic.

Write the Rough Draft.

With your initial research complete, you are ready to start drafting the paper.

- Use your sources only when necessary – do not pad the paper with quotes.
- Be sure that you explain the relevance of each citation to your argument. Do not simply quote or summarize and then move on. You must show us that you not only understand what you have just cited but that it applies to your point.

Do not Forget the MLA.

For every citation you make in your paper, you must document it. The *Master Guide to MLA Documentation and Formatting*, as well as your handbook, discusses what to do when you have a work with no author. It also has the basic guidelines for MLA documentation, including examples. For the latest MLA guides on Internet sources, you can also search online or access places like the Purdue OWL.

Keep Working While Your Teacher Has Your Rough Draft.

Just because a teacher has your rough draft does not mean you still should not keep doing work. You can look for other sources, work on your thesis, double check your works cited, etc. Of course, you may get your paper back with lots of corrections needed, but if you have turned

in the best rough draft you can, then usually you will not be so off track that you have to change topics.

Prepare the Final Version.

What should you do when you get your draft back?

- Read the comments carefully.
- If necessary, you may want to schedule a conference with the teacher.
- Do whatever he/she suggests and then go back over the paper, looking for documentation errors, grammar and mechanical errors, organization, and other basic writing issues.
- Have someone else read your paper who can give you quality feedback.
- Before turning it in, be sure you have included your rough draft, and make a copy of it in case your teacher loses the paper.

For more tips on research, search the Internet. There are free on-line books and web sites devoted to research writing for college and high school students. Do stay away from the paper mills. 1) Most of these papers are poorly written, and 2) I know how to track down the source of plagiarized papers.

List of Non-Credible or Non-Academic Sources

Here's a breakdown of why these types of sources are generally not considered credible for academic research.

General Reference Works

- Examples: dictionaries, encyclopedias, wikis
- Lack of Depth: These sources offer basic overviews and definitions, but they lack the in-depth analysis and original research that academic work requires.
- Potential for Inaccuracy: Wikis, especially, can be edited by anyone, introducing the possibility of errors and misinformation.
- Not Scholarly: These sources are not written by experts in the field or peer-reviewed, which are key criteria for academic credibility.
- Exception: Subject-specific encyclopedias are credible for academic research due to their expert authorship, in-depth content, rigorous editing, citations, scholarly tone, and target audience of researchers and professionals. Examples include: *Encyclopedia of Mathematics; The Grove Dictionary of Art; Encyclopedia of Philosophy; The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians; Encyclopedia of Social Work; Black's Law Dictionary*.

Personal Blogs and Message Boards:

- Subjectivity: These platforms are primarily for sharing personal opinions and experiences, not rigorously researched facts.
- Unverified Information: Claims made on blogs and forums often lack credible sources and evidence to back them up.

Consultation Sites

- Example: LinkedIn
- Professional Bias: Information on LinkedIn is often self-promotional and may not reflect a balanced or objective view.

Social Media

- Example: Facebook, Pinterest
- Ephemeral Nature: Social media posts are often fleeting and may lack the depth and context needed for academic research.
- Misinformation: Social media is notorious for the spread of misinformation and unverified claims.

AI-Generated Content:

- Examples: ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly, CoPilot

- Potential for Inaccuracy: AI models are still under development and can generate plausible-sounding but incorrect information.
- Lack of Originality: AI-generated content often regurgitates existing information rather than providing original insights or analysis.

Q&A Sites

- Example: Reddit, Quora
- Primary Function: To provide answers to specific questions posed by users.
- Content Source: Responses come from a wide range of users, with varying levels of expertise and knowledge.
- Reliability Concerns: Answers are often opinions or anecdotal evidence, not necessarily based on rigorous research or fact-checking.
- Academic Use: Generally not suitable for academic research due to the lack of reliable, verifiable information.

User-Generated Content (UGC) and SEO Sites

- Example: Yelp, TripAdvisor, Amazon reviews, Medium, VeryWell Health, WebMD, ThoughtCo, CNET, LifeHacker, The Spruce
- Primary Function:
    - UGC: To allow users to share their experiences, opinions, and reviews about products, services, or places.
    - SEO: To rank high in search engine results by optimizing content with specific keywords and phrases.
- Content Source: Content is created entirely by users, who may have varying levels of expertise and motivations.
- Reliability Concerns: UGC is highly subjective and prone to bias. Reviews can be manipulated, and there's no guarantee of accuracy. Information may be shallow, repetitive, or biased towards popular opinions to attract clicks.
- Academic Use:
    - UGC: Can provide insights into public opinion and user experiences but should be used with caution due to potential biases and lack of verification.
    - SEO: Generally not suitable for academic research due to the focus on popularity rather than accuracy and rigor.

Lifestyle Sites

- Example: MindBodyGreen, Refinery29 (Some also function as UGC and SEO)
- Primary Function: To provide information, advice, and recommendations on various lifestyle topics (e.g., health, home, food).
- Content Source: Content is typically created by staff writers or freelancers, not always experts in the field.

- Reliability Concerns: Information may be simplified, outdated, or biased to attract a broader audience or promote products.
- Academic Use: Can be useful for gaining general background information but should not be the sole source for research due to potential biases and lack of in-depth analysis.

Local Newspapers:

- Limited Scope: Local papers focus on local events and may not provide the broad perspective or in-depth analysis needed for academic research.
- Varying Journalistic Standards: While some local papers have high standards, others may be more focused on sensationalism than accuracy.

Essay-Sharing and Homework/Coursework Websites

- Examples: Course Hero, Study Hub
- Plagiarism Concerns: Using work from these sites is a form of academic dishonesty and can have serious consequences.
- Questionable Quality: The essays found on these sites may not be well-written or adhere to academic standards.

Famous Quotes Websites:

- Example: BrainyQuote
- Out of Context: Quotes can be easily taken out of context, leading to misinterpretations.
- Lack of Depth: Quotes alone do not provide the substantial evidence or analysis required in academic research.

Research Articles with No Citations:

- Lack of Transparency: Articles without citations make it impossible to verify the information or assess its reliability.
- Questionable Rigor: The absence of citations may indicate that the research was not conducted thoroughly or with proper academic standards.

How to Identify These Source Types

- **General Reference Works:** These are usually easy to spot. They are designed to provide general information, often in a structured format, and are not focused on original research or analysis.
- **Blogs and Message Boards:** Look for personal opinions, informal language, and a lack of citations.
- **User-Generated Content Sites:** These are platforms where users create and share content. Look for comments, reviews, forums, and discussion threads.
- **Q&A Sites:** Questions and answers from various users characterize these platforms.

- **Consultation Sites:** These platforms focus on connecting professionals and showcasing expertise.
- **SEO Sites:** Often filled with keywords and generic information, designed to rank high in search engines.
- **Lifestyle Sites:** Offer advice and information on various topics but lack the rigor of academic research.
- **Local Newspapers:** Focus on local news and events, with varying levels of journalistic standards.
- **Essay-Sharing and Homework/Coursework Websites:** Designed for students to share and access academic work.
- **Famous Quotes Websites:** Collections of quotes from various individuals, often without proper context.

Important Note:

While these sources may not be suitable for academic research, they can still be useful for gathering general background information or exploring different perspectives.

Key Takeaway:

Academic research requires credible sources that are reliable, accurate, and based on expert knowledge. Avoiding the sources listed above will help you ensure the quality and integrity of your research.

For your academic work, prioritize sources that pass the TRAAP Test:

- Credible: Written by experts, published in reputable journals, and peer-reviewed.
- Reliable: Based on evidence, fact-checked, and free from bias.
- Transparent: Clearly citing their sources and providing author information.

This will ensure that your research is well-founded and your arguments are strong.

Writing the Counterargument

All text below quoted from The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing.

We have seen how a writer needs to anticipate alternative views that give rise to objections and counterarguments. Surprisingly, one of the best ways to approach counterarguments is to summarize them fairly. Make your imagined reader's best case against your argument. By resisting the temptation to distort a counterargument, you demonstrate a willingness to consider the issue from all sides. Moreover, summarizing a counterargument reduces your reader's tendency to say. "Yes, but have you thought of…?" After you have summarized an objection or counterargument fairly and charitably you must then decide how to respond to it. Your two main choices are to rebut it or concede to it (Ramage, Bean and Johnson 392).

When rebutting or refuting an argument, you can question the argument's reasons and supporting evidence or the underlying assumptions or both…In some cases, an alternative view can be very strong. If so, don't hide that view from your readers; summarize it and concede to it (392).

Making concessions to opposing views is not necessarily a sign of weakness; in many cases, a concession simply acknowledged that the issue is complex and that your position is tentative. In turn, a concession can enhance a reader's respect for you and invite the reader to follow your example and weigh the strengths of your own argument charitably. Writers typically concede to opposing views with transitional expressions such as the following: Admittedly, I must admit that, I agree that, Granted, Even though, I concede that, While it is true that (392).

All text below is quoted from the Purdue OWL's handout on Writing Rebuttal:

In order to present a fair and convincing message, you may need to anticipate, research, and outline some of the common positions (arguments) that dispute your thesis. If the situation (purpose) calls for you to do this, you will present and then refute these other positions in the rebuttal section of your essay. (Brizee)

It is important to consider other positions because in most cases, your primary audience will be fence-sitters. Fence-sitters are people who have not decided which side of the argument to support. (Brizee)

People who are on your side of the argument will not need a lot of information to align with your position. People who are completely against your argument—perhaps for ethical or religious reasons—will probably never align with your position no matter how much information you provide. Therefore, the audience you should consider most important are those people who haven't decided which side of the argument they will support—the fence-sitters. (Brizee)

In many cases, these fence-sitters have not decided which side to align with because they see value in both positions. Therefore, to not consider opposing positions to your own in a fair manner may alienate fence-sitters when they see that you are not addressing their concerns or discussion opposing positions at all. (Brizee)

ORGANIZING YOUR REBUTTAL SECTION

[F]orecast all the information that will follow in the rebuttal section and then move point by point through the other positions addressing each one as you go. The outline below, adapted from Seyler's *Understanding Argument*, is an example of a rebuttal section from a thesis essay.

When you rebut or refute an opposing position, use the following three-part organization:

- **The opponent's argument**: Usually, you should not assume that your reader has read or remembered the argument you are refuting. Thus at the beginning of your paragraph, you need to state, accurately and fairly, the main points of the argument you will refute.
- **Your position**: Next, make clear the nature of your disagreement with the argument or position you are refuting. Your position might assert, for example, that a writer has not proved his assertion because he has provided evidence that is outdated, or that the argument is filled with fallacies.

Your refutation: The specifics of your counterargument will depend upon the nature of your disagreement. If you challenge the writer's evidence, then you must present the more recent evidence. If you challenge assumptions, then you must explain why they do not hold up. If your position is that the piece is filled with fallacies, then you must present and explain each fallacy.

Sources

Though we always want to use credible and relevant sources for our research, we also have to consider how our readers will react to the authors or publications we use. When we have choices, we should keep in mind not only the data we are mining from these sources but also their rhetorical effect on our reader. Some ways to decide this are:

- Consider what will turn off your reader. For example, a paper on qualities of a great leader might cite Hitler. Chances are, no matter how valid the info that I am using from him, I will get a negative reaction from most readers. If I am writing about the qualities of great leaders based on Machiavelli, who famously advised princes that they should encourage fear rather than love in their followers in order to maintain control, then citing Hitler is completely reasonable. I have added a context, Machiavelli's definition, which would make the choice of Hitler obvious rather than potentially racist. My paper is about "great" leaders, which is not necessarily the same as ethical or nice.
- Consider the audience's personal profile (including politics, culture, religion, age, gender, and geography – just to name a few). You may need to rethink exactly what you will use to support your thesis, the types of examples you will provide, and even the diction, tone, and style you will use in my writing.
- Caution: Ignoring the audience makes your ethos vulnerable. You can lose credibility or the reader's trust, and that is hard to regain. Of course, many arguments target a general audience that is bound together simply by a common interest in the issue, a

common nationality, or something else. This often makes writing more difficult because of the variety of demographics in an audience such as Americans or Christians.

Other Factors

Audience and Context (mentioned in previous sections) are also important aspects of counterargument.

Final Tips

MLA

Throughout your essay, you will be documenting your sources using MLA style. Please refer to the Master Guide to MLA Documentation & Formatting. Remember:

- All sources in your essay need **in-text citations** to show where you are using words, information and/or ideas other than your own.
- All sources must be documented on the **works cited page** at the end of the essay.
- Failure to do either or both of these will result in **plagiarism**.

Grammar and Mechanics

In English Composition, grammar and mechanics are your responsibilities, as is basic essay structure. If you do not understand a term I use, then look in your class resources first, try to find an answer on the Internet, and then ask me if you cannot find the answer or you are unsure if you have the correct answer. For more information on style, grammar, and mechanics, refer to the Master Guide to Grammar and Style and the 20 Most Common Errors handouts.

- College-level writing requires proficiency in grammar and mechanics.
- The diction level for college writing is formal or relaxed formal (allows for contractions).
- Students must revise (reconsider their thesis, organization, use of examples, etc.), edit (check for spelling mistakes, sentence errors, formatting errors), and check MLA. These should be separate steps.
- The five most common grammar mistakes students make are:
    - Sentence boundary errors: comma splices, run-ons, and fragments.
    - Point of view errors: Students use 1st or 2nd person when they should only use 3rd person in formal, academic essays unless the assignment specifies otherwise.
    - Wordiness: student writing rambles, is full of redundancies, does not use precise language.
    - Poor verb choice: overuse of the verbs to be, to do, to get, to have. Students overlook more interesting and precise verb choices.
    - Poor proofreading: students do not spell check or edit their writing for mistakes.
- Resources: For help with these problems, there are handouts, guides, and links to outside sources. You will find these resources in Brightspace's Announcements under

the appropriate heading as well as on the Content page under Helpful Handouts. Your handbook also provides valuable information to help you with all aspects of this class.

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