Sound Writing

University of Puget Sound
Sound Writing
University of Puget Sound

Cody Chun
Kieran O’Neil
Kylie Young
Julie Nelson Christoph

Contributor
Isabelle Anderson
Jordan Fonseca
Sarah Walling-Bell

Technical Assistance
Jahrme Risner
Cara Farnell

January 9, 2019
Acknowledgments

*Sound Writing* has been a community effort, developed over the course of many years. Julie Neff-Lippman—director of the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLT) from 1984 until 2011—laid the groundwork for this handbook, exploring the possibility of a Puget Sound writing handbook, working with writing advisors to develop many of the handouts still in use in the CWLT, and developing the culture of peer leadership in the CWLT that makes a project like this possible. Julie Nelson Christoph—director of the CWLT 2012-2018—has further developed the project, leading a pilot of some commercial handbooks, one of which was chosen and customized as the first Puget Sound writing handbook, in use from 2012–2017.

In 2015, conversations on campus about linguistic diversity, about the special role of writing in a liberal arts context, and about the benefits of online and freely accessible books made us wonder: Could Puget Sound develop its own writing handbook? And if we could, who would write it? How long would it take to write? What would the platform look like?

Student Writing Advisors Kylie Young ('17, STS and SOAN major), Kieran O’Neil ('16, Biology major), and Cody Chun ('17, English major) took a chance in spring 2016 and applied for the somewhat nebulous job of being “Writing Handbook Developers.” They faced an impossible task: collaboratively writing a handbook suitable for use in university writing courses ... in three months’ time.

This handbook originated in conversations among the four authors—over coffee in Seattle; about articles we read and scholarly lectures we attended on language and learning; in the comfy chairs in the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching; over weekly transatlantic and transpacific Skype calls when our team was physically separated; and, always, through our abiding faith in the worth and importance of our project. Cody, Kieran, and Kylie composed the words you are about to read, using Julie as a sounding board, advisor, and editor through the process. The writers are grateful to Julie for her mentorship, her trust in us and our abilities, and her ever-inspiring guidance and gusto.

As with any group project, part of the work has been identifying individual talents and coordinating efforts. We’ve been extremely fortunate in having a diverse range of interests and disciplinary backgrounds represented on the team. We’ve all learned a great deal about writing and collaboration from each other, and the team as a whole has coordinated efforts so that the project has progressed continuously, sometimes with the full team, sometimes with individual members stepping up and doing more when others were unable to do so. The collaborative process and support has been truly remarkable.

Many, many thanks go to former Associate Dean Martin Jackson for supporting the project in countless ways from the very earliest moment; this has been a huge project to undertake, and your willingness to entertain the possibil-
ity, to find the funding, to bounce ideas, and even to pinch-hit as a programmer have been invaluable.

Isabelle Anderson (’18, Chemistry and English major) was the first annual writing handbook developer who has, with excitement, humor, and diligence, taken on the (still nebulous) task of keeping the handbook up to date. We, the initial writers, are grateful for your willingness to improve the book that has come to mean so much to us. In 2017, she met with departments at Puget Sound to listen to faculty and develop many of the disciplinary writing guidelines that appear here.

Sarah Walling-Bell (’20, Computer Science) is the current writing handbook developer, who accomplished significant revisions to the Writing with Awareness chapter and who continues to develop the handbook.

Special thanks go to Rob Beezer for developing the fabulous PreTeXt (néé MathBook XML) format and making it available to us and for taking a chance on a non-math project. Thanks also to Jahrme Risner (’18, Math and Computer Science major) for inputting all those GoogleDocs into the PreTeXt format, fielding feedback in multiple platforms and from multiple people with aplomb. We appreciate your work to make information freely available and accessible to all. Cara Farnell, of the CWLT, is continuing the important work of keeping the handbook up to date. We are grateful to Sarah Stall and Julie Reynolds for helping us consider design options for the handbook and, especially, for Sarah’s intensive work proofreading a near-final draft.

We would also like to thank Geoffrey Block, Bill Breitenbach, Gwynne Brown, Kris Imbrigotta, Chris Kendall, Kriszta Kotsis, and Amy Spivey for making the time to be interviewed about writing, writing process, and advice to student writers. Thank you, as well, to Fallon Boyle, Bill Breitenbach, Nancy Bristow, Bev Conner, George Erving, Will Gent, Dexter Gordon, Priti Joshi, Pierre Ly, Julie Neff-Lippman, Helen Shears, Ariela Tubert, and Kara Widergren for their assistance with the example student papers and writing prompts. As always, thank you to Peggy Burge, Jane Carlin, and everyone at Collins Memorial Library for your collaboration. And thank you to the many Puget Sound students and faculty who have responded to surveys and participated in focus groups and discussions that have shaped this book.

Perhaps our greatest thanks are to you, our users! Thank you for using the Puget Sound writing handbook. We hope you will enjoy using it and that it will inspire you—as it has us—to think critically about language, to talk with each other about writing, and to engage in the communal effort that is at the heart of scholarship. Sound Writing is a living document and will continue to be revised online; please collaborate by sending your comments and suggestions to soundwriting@pugetsound.edu.
Preface

Whether you are reading this for class or browsing—whether you are working on an essay for your SSI or drafting your comparative politics thesis—whether you love writing or consider it a chore—*Sound Writing* is for you.

The purpose of *Sound Writing* is to help you develop a range of techniques that you can use to succeed as an academic writer. As you'll soon discover (if you have not discovered already), academic writing is a practice with its own conventions and expectations. Academic inquiry is about using the best possible evidence to grapple with contested issues. Academic writing places special emphasis on rigorous use of evidence to substantiate claims, on clear and specific theses, and on the framing of arguments within scholarly contexts. These traits distinguish academic writing from most popular writing (the type of writing that one finds on blogs, in newspapers and magazines, and on Facebook). Though it is possible to discuss “academic writing” as a coherent entity, academic writing is also diverse and reflects writers’ own personal, disciplinary, and sub-disciplinary biases. (Take a look at the example student essays included in the Resources section of this book.) In *Sound Writing*, we hope to provide you with the essentials of university writing so that you can write with as little stress and as much success as possible. Inside this book, you’ll find a breakdown of research, composition, and revision processes; strategies for overcoming common writing challenges; advice from faculty members; a guide to APA-, Chicago-, and MLA-style citations; and much more.

Though *Sound Writing* offers advice and tips, we write in hopes that you will consider how this advice resonates in your particular context and that you will use the advice not as rules to follow blindly but as material that enables you to make informed choices. Our work is guided by the belief that language evolves and reflects, in its evolution, both socio-political change and cultural particularity. The very language that you use when you engage in academic inquiry embodies choices, as well as the history of choices and events that led to the moment of your writing.

As intentional writers, ourselves, we have made choices that you may find surprising, troublesome, or just plain wrong. For instance, we have chosen in many places to use “they” as a singular pronoun (see *They As a Singular Pronoun*). Much as we’d like to think that we’re in the forefront of thinking about language change, we’re not being particularly radical. Unlike other alternative pronouns—like “hiser” and “thon”—“they” has been used in this way for centuries. Following suit with the 2017 AP Styleguide, we use “they” in many places where no gender is specified, or where a named person might not use “his” or “her” pronouns. In other places in the text, we acknowledge that language can marginalize, traumatize, and oppress, and we suggest alternatives to sexist, LGBTQ+-phobic, racist, classist, and ableist terminologies.
One aspect of academic writing that we grappled with as we wrote this guide is the notion of a “Standard American English” (SAE). Although SAE is by no means the only “correct” form of English, it has a privileged status in the academy and in our society as a whole, and it can be an important tool for social mobility. We recognize this fact at the same time that we work against its implications. Throughout Sound Writing, we call attention to aspects of SAE that are especially contested, and we recognize from time to time that alternatives exist.

Our goal is to promote the socially conscious and “sound writing” that is at the heart of a Puget Sound education. As writing advisors at the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching and as students who have faced challenges similar to those that you will face, we have tailored this book to the needs of Puget Sound students. We hope you will find it useful, and that you’ll help make it even better by emailing your suggestions to soundwriting@pugetsound.edu.
Overview

In order to make this Sound Writing handbook as easy to use and as accessible as possible, we’ve broken it into twelve chapters, each one focusing on a different aspect of the research and writing process. Clicking on a chapter title in the Table of Contents will take you to that chapter, which means you no longer need to flip through pages to find what you’re looking for!

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 suggest techniques for researching, reading source material, and taking notes. This is a good place to start if you have an assignment prompt and want some advice on finding, reading, or analyzing sources.

Chapter 3 breaks down the basic parts of the argument, helps you to identify which argumentation style(s) to use, offers tips for making a strong argument, and covers how to develop, organize, and support your thesis.

Chapter 4 offers brainstorming techniques, planning strategies, and outlining formats to get your scholarly gears turning. It also breaks down the skeleton of the paper, offering tips on how to compose and organize introductions, topic sentences, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Writing is not a linear process, so you’ll likely still be conducting research and changing your argument as you go; to maintain your groove, refer to the sections on revising and adding new research. And if you find that you just can’t write any longer, take a look at the section on overcoming writer’s block and other obstacles for ideas on how to overcome anxiety and frustration, manage your time, and procrastinate (yes, procrastinate!) productively.

In Chapter 5, we compile guidelines from faculty members across campus to help you navigate within and between the different disciplines you will encounter over the course of your Puget Sound education, as you fulfill your core requirements and generally become a more well-rounded, inquisitive, boundary-crossing liberal arts version of yourself.

Chapter 6 suggests ways to write with greater sensitivity to the social ramifications of certain English usages. We include a list of terminologies of oppression for the respectful writer to avoid and a list of possible alternatives.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 focus on the nitty-gritty, but necessary, elements of language, offering grammatical and mechanical advice and examples of how to cite your sources in keeping with the APA, Chicago, and MLA styles.

Chapter 9 considers the relationship between writing and speaking, and offers advice on how to convert your written argument into an oral argument. This chapter also includes suggestions for effective public speaking, for organizing your presentation, and for managing your time.

Chapter 10 marks the shift in the handbook from topics that fit squarely into reading and writing to topics about academic success more broadly. The chapter breaks into three main sections: talking to professors, managing time, and organizing your physical and digital materials. The strategies discussed are not the be–all–and–end–all of any of these topics; however, they give the
reader a foundation of “best practices” for getting started.

Chapter 11 extends beyond academic writing to offer advice on writing tricky non-academic genres like emails to professors and employers, personal statements, and resumes and cover letters. Those non-academic genres are mostly short, but they’re every bit as challenging to write well as a long research paper is. Don’t worry; we’ve got your back.

Chapter 12 offers tips and tricks for using technology to help you as a writer, including how to get the most out of your word processing program, how to use Zotero to help you wrangle sources and citations, and how to use tools within Adobe Acrobat Reader to help you read and annotate pdf documents.

Appendix A (Glossary of Academic Terms) offers definitions of some of the new vocabulary you will be encountering in college—ranging from words you may see in assignments, to terminology associated with various research terms and kinds of sources, to rhetorical terms, to SAT-type words that you really will encounter in everyday usage.

Appendix B (Resources) offers links to supplementary aids such as videos, handouts, and example papers. These resources will help you make the best use of the handbook, whether you are using it in class as part of an exercise, or using it on your own for independent learning.

Go to soundwriting.pugetsound.edu for the latest version of Sound Writing.
# Contents

Acknowledgments v
Preface vii
Overview ix

1 Research Methods 1
  1.1 Essentials 1
  1.2 Defining and Refining A Research Question 3
  1.3 Research Tips and Tricks 5

2 How to Read 7
  2.1 Finding, Skimming, and Reading Sources 7
  2.2 Different Types of Reading 10
  2.3 Note-Taking Strategies 13
  2.4 How to Read Writing Prompts 15

3 Forming Your Argument 22
  3.1 Elements of an Argument 22
  3.2 Diversity of Argumentation Modes 25
  3.3 Making a Strong Argument 26
  3.4 Developing a Thesis 28
  3.5 Organization of an Argument 33
  3.6 Using Evidence to Support an Argument 33

4 The Writing Process 38
  4.1 Brainstorming 38
  4.2 Planning 40
  4.3 Outlining 44
  4.4 Introductions 46
  4.5 Topic Sentences, Transitions, and Body Paragraphs 52
  4.6 Conclusions 56
  4.7 Research Process While Writing 59
  4.8 Revising 62
  4.9 Overcoming Obstacles 65

5 Discipline-Specific Writing 73
  5.1 Writing for African American Studies 73
  5.2 Writing for Art and Art History 76
  5.3 Writing for Biology 78
  5.4 Writing for Business 80
5.5 Writing for Chemistry ......................... 82
5.6 Writing for English ............................ 84
5.7 Writing for History .............................. 87
5.8 Writing for Music and Music History .... 89
5.9 Writing for Psychology ........................ 91

6 Writing With Awareness ....................... 93
   6.1 Writing with Respect ....................... 94
   6.2 Inclusive Language .......................... 95
   6.3 Writing and Correctness .................... 112

7 Writing at the Sentence Level .............. 115
   7.1 Grammar Basics .............................. 115
   7.2 Tricky Grammar .............................. 128
   7.3 Style and Word Choice ...................... 139
   7.4 Punctuation and Capitalization Basics .... 150
   7.5 Top 10 Confusing Things in English ....... 162

8 Citations ........................................ 166
   8.1 The Basics .................................. 166
   8.2 Avoiding Plagiarism ......................... 170
   8.3 Citing a Book with One Author ............. 172
   8.4 Citing a Book With Multiple Authors ....... 173
   8.5 Citing an Edition Other Than the First .... 174
   8.6 Citing a Chapter in an Edited Book ......... 175
   8.7 Citing a Book Review ........................ 176
   8.8 Citing a Print Journal Article ............... 177
   8.9 Citing a Journal Article from an Online Database ..... 178
   8.10 Citing a Website ............................ 179
   8.11 Citing a Work From a Website .......... 180
   8.12 Citing a Online Newspaper ............... 181
   8.13 Citing an Entry in an Encyclopedia ....... 182
   8.14 Citing a Lecture or Speech ............... 183
   8.15 Citing a Film ................................ 184
   8.16 Citing a Music Performance ............... 185
   8.17 Citing a Music Recording ................. 186
   8.18 Citing an Artwork ........................... 187
   8.19 Citing a Government Document ............ 188
   8.20 Citing a Graphic Novel ..................... 189
   8.21 Citing a Translation ....................... 190

9 Speaking and Writing ......................... 192

10 Strategies for Academic Success .......... 197
   10.1 Talking to Professors ....................... 197
   10.2 Time Management ........................... 203
   10.3 Getting Organized .......................... 211

11 Different Genres of Writing ................ 217
   11.1 Email Etiquette ............................. 217
   11.2 Personal Statements ......................... 220
   11.3 Cover Letters ................................ 222
   11.4 Resume .................................... 225
   11.5 Thank-You Notes ............................ 229
## CONTENTS

12 Using Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.1 Microsoft Word</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 Zotero</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3 Adobe Acrobat Reader</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Glossary of Academic Terms 268

B Resources 272
Chapter 1

Research Methods

1.1 Essentials

The word “research” can seem daunting, but doing independent research can be some of the most exciting work you’ll do in college.

Collins Library provides access to rich collections, engaging learning environments, innovative instruction, and high-quality service in support of the university’s mission of teaching, learning, civic engagement, and diversity. We encourage you to familiarize yourself early on with the scope of materials and the types of services available to you in an academic library, as they may differ markedly from those available in most school and public libraries. Collins Library works in close partnership with the faculty and other campus departments to support your development as a scholar.

Knowing that Collins Library is there to help you is the first step, but you’ll also need to get going on your own. Here are some guidelines that will help you not only do research successfully but enjoy doing it.

The first thing to know is that Collins Memorial Library is a university library and is probably a bit different than other libraries you’ve encountered in the past. This is because it’s designed for people like yourself who are doing research, more than for people who are looking for a book to read or a movie to watch at home (though Collins Library has those things, too!).

Pick a topic that interests you. Many times, there will be a topic that your professor has talked about a lot in class. Some of these topics may be straightforward and obvious, while others might seem more obscure and difficult to tackle but more interesting to you. Always choose the one you’re most interested in. No matter how easy a project seems to be from the beginning, if it doesn’t interest you, the research process will feel slow and painful. If, instead, you choose a topic that actually grabs your attention, the process of sifting through and evaluating dozens of articles and books won’t feel tedious at all, and you’ll have more energy to devote to thinking and rethinking your research question.

Find the right search tools. Primo—the search engine that shows up first when you click on the Collins Library website—may seem like it has every
source you could possibly need. While Primo can be very helpful, there are more than 200 other databases to which the library provides access. Each of these databases is specifically catered to a particular topic (or topics), which means that you won’t find as many unrelated articles as you would in Primo. For the same reason, you may also find sources more pertinent to your research topic by using more specific databases. To figure out which database you need, try checking out research and course guides. If you’re undertaking interdisciplinary research, you’ll likely want to search more than one database.

**Use your library course or subject guide.** The research and subject guides are created by the research librarians for you to use. They have a lot of great information that can be very helpful for you in your research process. For instance, they can help you figure out whether your source is scholarly or popular, and whether it’s primary, secondary, or tertiary. They also can point you to which databases you should be using and give you tips on how to use them. If you get stuck in your process, the course guides also have the contact information of the liaison librarian working with your class, as well as that of the peer research advisor.

**Get help.** There are people whose job it is to help you make the best out of your research paper—use them! The liaison librarians and peer research advisor love when students ask them for help. All of their contact information is available on the library website, so you can call or email them to make an appointment or ask a question. The peer research advisor also has drop-in hours in the library after normal business hours, so you can still get help later in the evening. In addition, Collins Library participates in a 24/7 chat service that is staffed by librarians around the world. Whether you’re just starting to think of a topic or nearing the end of your process, the librarians and peer research advisor can get you the help you need.

**Start early.** You never know exactly how long your research project is going to take, but chances are it’s going to take a lot longer than you think. The first sources you find won’t always be the most helpful, so it’s important to take your time with the search. Also, your question will change from when you first begin, so make sure you allow yourself enough time to get that second or third round of research done, as well.

If you find a really great book through SUMMIT or ILLiad, remember that it can take up to ten business days to get to you, so it’s important to account for that in your timeline.

**Don’t give up.** Research can be a long process. Finding the best sources for your project can take weeks, months, or even a full semester! Sometimes, you will hit a roadblock and then feel like you have to go all the way back to square one. That’s okay, because research is meant to be a cyclical process (see Section 4.7). Even when it feels like you are starting over, you are still learning more and more about your topic, which will result in a very well-researched final paper!
Research is a creative, recursive process, and it’s likely that you’ll encounter dozens of potentially relevant sources. It’s easy to get overwhelmed, but here are two surefire strategies for handling information overload:

- Consider learning how to use a knowledge-management tool. Collins Library supports RefWorks and Zotero, and any librarian would be more than happy to help you get started. These tools do so much more than just format citations; they let you organize and reorganize your sources as your research question develops, and they support extensive note-taking.

- Your research assignment prompt likely will indicate what kinds of (and often how many) sources you should aim for. But a source is not a source is not a source! How are you using sources? Take things one step further by analyzing precisely how you will use each source when building your argument so that you’re able to use your sources in the most appropriate way. One helpful framework is Joseph Bizup’s BEAM model. BEAM is an acronym intended to help us think about the various ways we use sources when writing a researched argument. Understanding how you’re using a source is essential to using it correctly and effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BEAM.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong> You use tertiary sources (subject encyclopedias, textbooks, overviews) to establish basic facts and definitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exhibit</strong> You analyze and interpret primary sources, a dataset, or another phenomenon of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argument</strong> You evaluate and assess the arguments in academic secondary sources as a way to join the scholarly conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong> You use theories or disciplinary approaches when examining your topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though writing in high school consists mostly of “background” sources, most research writing that you do in college will be stronger if you use sources in a combination of most or all of these ways.

### 1.2 Defining and Refining A Research Question

Once you’ve identified and explored your research topic, you’ll need to work on refining your research question. A strong research question will allow you to delve into a genuine problem or question to which an answer is not obvious. In other words, you want a question that is debatable and arguable. In creating your own argument to answer the research question, you will use evidence from your research to acknowledge and refute any counterevidence that you encounter.
CHAPTER 1. RESEARCH METHODS

Characteristics of Strong Research Questions.

- typically ask “why?” or “how?” questions
- have a clear focus
- are feasible to answer with the resources and time available to you
- are calibrated in scope to the required length of the writing assignment
- are of interest or significance to others

Key Steps.

1. Begin by asking as many open-ended “why?” or “how?” questions as you can think of. Your topic should be rich enough to generate at least three potential research questions. If you have difficulty generating more than one research question, it’s likely that you need to include another variable or otherwise broaden the scope of your inquiry. An excellent guide to getting from a topic to a question can be found in Chapter 3 of The Craft of Research, available as an ebook in Primo to members of the University of Puget Sound community.

2. Begin to evaluate your research questions. Which question interests you the most? Why?

3. Seek out feedback.

   Your peers will give you a ready sense of whether or not your question is clear and interesting.

   Peer writing advisors will ask you lots of clarifying questions and help you develop the best possible formulation of your research question.

   Librarians will help you explore potential resources for tackling your research question and also will give you honest advice about the feasibility of your focus and project.

   Your professors are subject experts and are excellent resources for helping you identify where your question fits in the ongoing scholarly conversation.

4. Be open to refining your research question. As you continue the research and writing processes, you may discover that your question is too broad or too narrow, or that there’s another, related research question that your evidence is suggesting.

5. Hold off on deciding what your thesis is until you’ve identified a viable research question and have begun to delve into your research sources. Committing to a thesis prematurely
can hamper your research process by causing you only to seek evidence that supports your argument.

1.3 Research Tips and Tricks

Go see a liaison librarian. They will show you how to navigate databases, find hard-to-find sources, and save you a LOT of time.

Check the works cited or bibliography of a scholarly source. You may struggle to find more than a few sources that perfectly suit your topic. In such a case, look at the the references cited by the few sources that you have found. There’s a good chance you’ll find other articles that can help you get back on track.

Refine your search terms. Sometimes you may find that a database search of your topic returns few to no results. Before giving up, try using different combinations of search terms. Sometimes the terms that make sense to you may not be quite the same as the ones scholars before you have used. If you’re really stuck, using a thesaurus to find synonyms can be a helpful trick. Some databases make use of specialized subject terms, too, so this is another place where a librarian can really help out.

Learn some handy tricks for searching databases. Use an asterisk (*) at the end of a word (or root of a word) or to replace a letter within a word:

- **Wom*n** will tell the database to search for both “women” and “woman.”
- **Canad*” will tell the database to search for “Canada” and “Canadian.”

Put phrases in quotation marks so that the database knows to search for that exact phrase—"information literacy" instead of information literacy.

| OR | will expand your search to look for more than one keyword: cars OR autos OR automobiles will find sources that contain any one of these keywords.
| AND | will limit your search to only those sources that contain both keywords: racism AND slavery will identify only the sources that include both keywords.
| NOT | will exclude sources that contain that keyword.

**List 1.3.1:** Make full use of Boolean operators
KEYWORDS & SEARCH TERMS

1. **ASTERISK (*)**
   - at the end of a word finds words with all alternate endings.
   - Canada* = Canada and Canadian

2. **OR**
   - expands your search to look for more than 1 keyword.
   - cars OR autos OR automobiles

3. **AND**
   - to limit your search only to sources with both keywords.
   - racism AND slavery

4. **NOT**
   - excludes sources that contain that keyword.
   - NOT Canada*
Chapter 2

How to Read

Yes, we know. You learned to read over a decade ago! Why is there a chapter on reading? This chapter is not so much about literacy as it is about strategy. Since you’ll likely have to read a lot during your time at Puget Sound, it’s helpful to have some strategies that will make reading and researching as quick and painless as possible.

Reading is the first step to writing, and any skilled writer has undoubtedly read a lot. The first thing you need to remember is to do your course readings! Not only will you be completing work that will help you in your courses, but you’ll also get a better feel for writing in that discipline. Your future self will thank you! Reading your course readings also prepares you for researching in that discipline. Especially when you’re doing research, being strategic about what and how you read is essential to producing quality content at a pace that isn’t agonizingly slow. For more details, tips, and some bad jokes, read on!

2.1 Finding, Skimming, and Reading Sources

Congratulations on finding some sources! Now what? Take a picture of all your books and post it to Instagram so everyone knows that you’re taking college seriously! #totheheights It can be intimidating to have collected piles of useful sources only to realize how much time it will take you to read through them. But do you really need to read all of them completely? The way you approach any source will depend on the nature of the source, the amount of time you have, and the information you seek.
Of the sources you’ll be working with, many will be primary and secondary. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine whether a source is primary or secondary. For instance, if you’re writing an essay for a literature course on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, then *King Lear* would likely be your primary source. However, if you’re writing a paper analyzing patterns in the critical reception of *King Lear*, then you may find yourself working with what would otherwise be considered secondary sources—critical interpretations of the play, for instance—and analyzing those. (For more information on the types of sources, see this Research Fundamentals guide from Collins Library.) That said, in order to find any source, it’s important to know what kind of source you’re looking for. Think about the kind of information you need, and come up with a list of search terms—particular words and concepts you think would return helpful titles.

### 2.1.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources are the texts (though they aren’t always “texts”) upon which you perform the most analysis and upon which you base your argument. It is always desirable to read your primary sources carefully and in their entirety. It’s hard to write an argument about a book, for instance, without knowing how it ends or who one of its main characters is. Reading primary sources completely is especially important for essays that depend on analyses of a text’s language. You can’t analyze language that you haven’t read! (The same holds for non-textual “texts” such as paintings, musical compositions, or scientific data—spend time with the source, and think about what its parts add up to.)

### 2.1.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are texts that you use to supplement your argument in some way: by establishing a theoretical premise, by providing a point of reference or departure, or by providing some historical or biographical context (to name


a few). They are the secondary objects of your analysis and do not comprise
the bulk of your argument. Though it’s often rewarding to read secondary
sources in their entirety, it’s not always practical. The following are some tips
for getting the most out of your secondary sources:

Figure out what you’re looking for Because secondary sources are sup-
plementary, it shouldn’t be too difficult to identify what information
you need. Writing a paper on the presidency of Barack Obama and
need a source that describes the international response to his election?
Some useful search terms might include: Obama, election, international,
response.

Read the introduction and the conclusion This should give you a good
idea of the starting point and end point of the source’s argument and its
major points. Assess the usefulness of the source based on these sections.
If the source doesn’t look like it will be of great use to you, put it to the
side. For instance, if you found a source called The Military Legacy of the
Obama Administration, you might browse through it for a hidden nugget
of information, but chances are the source may not be the most helpful
to you.

Identify relevant passages Browse headings and subheadings, or chapters,
if your source is a book. Skim any relevant sections for key words (see the
section on skimming, hereafter). Find a heading that reads “European
Reactions to the Election of Barack Obama”? Mark it!

Search for key words It’s possible to do this manually (picture the word
in your head and let your eyes roam the page), but it’s far easier to do
electronically. If your source is electronic, find the search function on
your computer and type in key words: Obama, election, international,
response.

If your source has an index, browse it for key words The index is at
the back of the book, and it should refer you to specific pages on which
the concept is discussed. The index is also a good way to look for relevant
words that you may not have thought of.

2.1.3 Skimming

In general, the more actively and patiently you approach a text, the more com-
prehensive your reading will be. However, sometimes it is highly impractical
to read a source in its entirety. Whether you’re doing some preliminary read-
ing to familiarize yourself with the existing scholarly discussion or to cram for
class, skimming can be a good way to extract the main idea of the text in as
little time as possible. Here are some pointers for skimming:

Read the introduction and the conclusion Doing this will give you a sense
of the general trajectory of the argument.

Read the first sentence of every paragraph This sentence is usually suf-
ficient to tell you what the main point of the paragraph is and whether
you should spend time reading it.

Read both horizontally and vertically Let your eyes roam. Look for key-
words and bolded or italicized items.

Read for points and not for analysis Though it’s always good to under-
stand how the author arrived at a claim, it is more productive in a pinch
to skip the analyses and return to them later.
2.2 Different Types of Reading

You will encounter numerous kinds of readings throughout your college experience (and beyond). Because there are various ways in which we use different kinds of sources, there are also several reading strategies we can use to read our sources most effectively and efficiently. One key skill is to be able to identify why you’re reading a source: How will you use it, what information will you need from it, and how will you record or take notes on what you learn from it? The answers to these questions will help you decide how to read your source.

2.2.1 Active reading: ALL READING you do should be active reading!

In order to read critically, you must read actively. Active reading requires you to be active—to actually do things while you read. No, you don’t need to run on a treadmill while you read The Odyssey (although that would be interesting). Instead, your mind needs to be active doing things that keep you engaged in the reading, including (but not at all limited to!) writing marginal notes, underlining, using a symbolic system, asking questions, and summarizing thoughts or sections.

You might be muttering to yourself, “But reading is enough work!” But know that active reading helps you understand and remember what a text says the first time you read it, so you don’t have to waste your time reading the same paragraph over and over again. Plus, having a pen in your hand as you read makes it easier for you to write funny comments in the margins as you get frustrated (we all do it). Just be careful not to fall asleep with your pen uncapped. ...

2.2.2 Reading Critically

No matter the type or purpose of a source, the reading you’ll be doing for your Puget Sound courses will almost always be critical. Reading critically means that you do far more than read the words on a page—you engage with them by thinking about them. As you will read in Chapter 3, academic writing is all about participating in larger scholarly conversations. This participation is largely about making argumentative claims and supporting them with evidence in order to convince an audience of those claims. When you read an academic work, then, you’re also participating in the scholarly conversation around that
work. As a result, reading critically requires you to read and evaluate the author’s claims and evidence. While it isn’t your job to treat your sources as if you were a movie or restaurant critic, you should be aware of the places in which the author’s argument is unconvincing, contradictory, or contentious. (Note: Critical reading for some primary sources can be slightly different, but we will address those differences in the “close reading” section that follows.)

You can think critically about the text in a number of ways, including:

- **identifying** the author’s argument(s) and evidence.
- **noting** key ideas or claims.
- **connecting** the text’s information, message, argument, themes, etc. to previous content you’ve read or learned in class or in your other classes.
- **looking up** words, phrases, or concepts with which you’re unfamiliar.
- **asking questions** in the margins or on another piece of paper about what you don’t understand.
- **raising new questions** that the reading has inspired.
- **contextualizing** the reading and its content/argument.
- **listening to your gut** and allowing yourself to develop feelings and opinions about the text—these feelings might turn into great starting points for an argument or a paper.

Below are some questions to consider as you go about evaluating claims, evidence, and the source as a whole:

- Do the author’s connections between their claims and their evidence make sense?
- Is their evidence valid for and accepted by the discipline in which they’re writing?
- Does the author’s argument contradict, support, or deviate from other arguments you’ve read? If so, which argument is more convincing? Why?
- Are there any points you can argue against? Or any points that support another argument you want to make? In what ways can this source be useful to you?

**Close reading.** Close reading most frequently occurs in literary studies, but you can also use close reading skills for other disciplines, such as history or sociology. Like reading critically and actively, reading closely enables you to engage with the text on a much deeper level than if you simply skimmed or scanned it. Using the critical and active reading skills you’ve developed, you now need to add in an additional component: close analysis. You perform a close analysis of a formal text in the same way you would agonize over the meaning of the word “okay” in a text message from your new romantic interest. In both cases, “close analysis” means that you are reading a relatively small portion of text in extreme detail. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about close readings is that you are not only trying to describe the text. While describing the text may be an important part of your analysis, you need to do just that—analyze! Your analysis extends beyond the literal meaning of the words on the page to the underlying meaning the writer is conveying.
Consider asking yourself these questions as you do a close reading:

- What is the author saying? Is the message clear? What does it mean?
- Do I see any patterns?
- Is the text in first person? Second? Third?
- Does anything about the grammar or sentence structure stick out?
- What literary devices does the author use—e.g., metaphor, simile, hyperbole, imagery, personification, alliteration, allusion, euphony or cacophony, symbolism, irony, etc.? (No matter what you notice, there’s probably a fancy word that describes it: parataxis? anagnorisis? epanalepsis? What the—?!)
- If the text is a poem, what meter, rhythm, and rhyme scheme is the author using? Even if the text isn’t a poem, are there any phonetic patterns or rhythms?
- Are there any words you don’t know? (If so, look them up!)
- Is any type of character or plot development happening in the passage?
- What is the relationship between content and form in the passage? How do the passage’s formal features inflect the meaning of the passage?

The text that you have read closely is your evidence. To convince your audience of your argument, you must take careful and detailed notes (i.e., doing careful and detailed active reading). By including all of the necessary analysis and textual examples, you can tell your reader exactly how you’ve interpreted a passage.
Reading in the Sciences. Reading in the sciences (social, earth, hard, soft, or otherwise) can be a whole different beast than reading literature, historical documents, or humanities-based secondary sources. If you’ve ever tried to read a peer reviewed scientific article you may have found yourself feeling lost and confused by the technical words and abbreviations. But have no fear! By using the following strategies, you can become a savvy reader of scientific articles:

- Start by reading the title and abstract a few times. While you may not absorb it all on a first or even a second reading, the title and abstract of a scientific article offer a snapshot of the whole article. Use the title and abstract as a mental guide to lead you through the text.

- Next, skim the introduction to get the context of the project. Make sure to read the last paragraph of the introduction because the research question of the paper will usually be there. Then, skim the discussion/conclusion to determine if or how the goals projected in the introduction were accomplished.

- Step three is to look at the figures. While the authors of the paper are motivated to tell a compelling story about their data, it’s harder to manipulate a figure. Spend some time reading the figure captions and understanding how the data matches up with what the authors are saying in the text.

- If you want to get a still deeper understanding of the paper, read the methodology section. If you read this section carefully and actively, it will allow you to suss out whether the paper stands up to scientific rigor.

- Know that you will need to look terminology up along the way. Even professors need to do this when they read articles in an unfamiliar research area.

2.3 Note-Taking Strategies

Whether you’re listening to an in-class lecture, reading a reading assignment, or skimming articles or books for your own research, taking good notes is essential. Notes have two main purposes: 1) to help you read actively and understand the content of the reading, and 2) to help remind your future self what was important about the reading. Though there are plenty of standardized note-taking strategies that you can use, such as Cornell notes, outlining, and mapping, in this section we will focus on deciding which strategies work for you and in which contexts specific strategies work best. For some people, the same type of notes may work in all disciplinary situations, while other people require different strategies for different disciplines or assignments. If you haven’t decided which strategies work best for you, try some out and be mindful of which ones help you learn most effectively and efficiently.

Before you begin reading or taking notes, ask yourself: What class are you taking notes for? Does this class require you to know a lot of specific information (e.g., biological processes, historical events, or literary terms), or does it focus more on understanding (e.g., why a historical event happened, how to find a derivative, or what type of research method is best for a certain situation)? While all classes have a mix of both types of information, identifying the primary type of information you’ll be interacting with will help you decide what form your notes should take.
General Guidelines.

Identify the main argument of the paper or chapter The main argument of a paper or chapter is also called a thesis (see Main Claim: What is the main point you are trying to convey?). The thesis will help guide your reading and note-taking by telling you what about the argument is important and what you need to pay attention to. You can usually find a thesis in the abstract and near the end of the introduction. If you’re having trouble locating the thesis, you might also read the conclusion (don’t worry about spoilers—usually academic writing is up front about the conclusions of an investigation).

Identify the main point of each paragraph As you’ll see in Argumentation as Process, clear paragraphs begin with topic sentences. The purpose of a topic sentence is to tell the reader what the paragraph will be about. Use this to your advantage! Like a mini-thesis for each paragraph, topic sentences will guide your reading by telling you what information is worthy to note.

Keep the discipline and class in mind You can’t remember everything from every reading, so be strategic about what you pay attention to. Does your discipline focus on data? Dates? Or should you pay more attention to the syntax and voice of the reading? Knowing what you’re looking for helps you take better and more useful notes.

Keep yourself and your personal preferences in mind If you hate outlining because you don’t get it, then play around with note-taking strategies until you find what makes the most sense to you, whatever the discipline. If you can’t memorize information in your notes and need to use flashcards, then do that. As long as you’re recording all of the information that you need to successfully recall information and understand concepts, don’t worry about what you’re “supposed” to be doing.

Tip. If you want some assistance figuring out your favorite note-taking style(s), make an academic consulting appointment at the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLTL)!
Highlight and underline enough, but not too much. We know that you’ve heard this a million times before, but don’t waste your highlighter ink by highlighting unnecessarily! The point of highlighting is to tell yourself what’s important, so highlighting everything doesn’t do you much good.

**Tip.** If you just can’t resist highlighting, then make sure you have a way to indicate to your future self (who will inevitably be reading the highlighted work) which pieces of information are simply highlighted because you think they are interesting and which ones are highlighted because they’re important. You might use underlining, asterisks, or other symbols to denote this difference.

**Marginal Notes and Annotations.** Take lots of marginal notes! Marginal notes are great tools to ensure that you’re reading actively. By writing your own thoughts about the reading and summaries of the author’s argument, you’re engaging with the reading on a level beyond simply reading the words on the page. Not only will marginal notes help you stay focused, but they’ll also be useful when you have to look back over a reading to study for a test or research for a paper.

The most important thing to remember when you’re annotating a source is that what you do doesn’t matter as much as how and why you do it. For instance, it makes no difference whether you use asterisks or smiley faces to indicate that something is important; it only matters that you know what it means now and you’ll know what it means later. You can highlight, use different color pens, make different symbols or words, use sticky notes or tabs, or dog-ear your pages (unless you’re using a library book). Figure out a symbolic system that you like, and then stick to it!

**Tip.** If you’re getting bored with a reading, try writing a few funny comments in the margins. You could even use a curse word. Not only will you give yourself a nice laugh, but the study break will help you refocus and keep reading. These initial emotional reactions to a reading will also help you remember it better in the long term because you’re interacting with the reading in new and interesting ways.

### 2.4 How to Read Writing Prompts

One of things that makes Puget Sound such a vibrant intellectual space is the diversity of pedagogical styles represented on campus; as students, we
can attest that this diversity makes for more flexible and creative thinkers. That said, we know that it can be difficult to develop a consistent way to interpret and approach writing assignments when those assignments vary by professor and even by course. In this section, you’ll find some tips on reading, understanding, and responding to writing assignments. You may also find it helpful to read Chapter 5 on Discipline-Specific Writing.

It’s important to get started on your essay as early as you can to allow yourself the most time to develop and revise your ideas. To this effect, read through your assignment as soon as you receive it and identify the following:

**The Purpose** When approaching an assignment, it’s useful to identify the purpose of the assignment. Asking yourself, “Why did Professor _____ assign this essay?” can help you understand what your professor wants you to get out of this assignment. Often, professors assign written work to clarify your thinking on a topic or concept, sharpen some relevant academic skill, or both. Thus, your English professor might ask you to write an essay about Gertrude Stein to give you practice deciphering ambiguous poetry, or your sociology professor might ask you to write an autoethnography to personalize the connection between, for instance, dorm life and capitalism. Knowing why you’re writing a paper—that is, knowing that your professor is not sadistically assigning work—actually makes writing the paper easier.

**The Work to be Done** Now that you’ve figured out the purpose of the assignment, it’s time to identify what the assignment is asking you to do. To do so, pay attention to the active verbs of the prompt. If your prompt asks you to “Analyze Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*,” make sure your essay is founded on textual analysis. If your prompt asks you to “Compare the timelines of the Korean War and the Vietnam War,” make sure your paper compares. Identifying these active verbs can give you a basic sense of how your professor will evaluate your essay—Does it analyze the novel? Does it compare the wars?—and can guide your writing to meet those expectations.

Also, identify what type of evidence that you’ll need to substantiate your argument: If your professor explicitly asks for a “statistical analysis of American automobile consumption in the past decade,” make sure you draw on statistics. (Often, this information is implied in the language of the prompt: When a prompt asks you to analyze *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, you know you’ll be working with the novel.) If you don’t know what type of evidence your professor expects you to use, ask.

Once you know what your professor is looking for, make a list of things to keep in mind as you write: Having this list for easy reference will keep your paper on topic and help you to foreground the skills under evaluation.

**Any Suggestions** There are things you must do for an assignment, and there are also things you might do. Professors, especially those at Puget Sound, sincerely want you to succeed. Because they’re so benevolent, your professors might provide some suggestions for writing or constructing an argument in response to the prompt. These suggestions can be helpful points of departure, especially if you’re having difficulty formulating a response. They’re also good examples of responses that your professor would accept. If it seems like there are a lot of questions, chances are, you aren’t required to answer all of them (professors don’t want to read
essays full of a bunch of disjointed ideas). If you’re not sure whether something is required or just suggested, ask your professor.

**Key Information** Once you know the why and the how of your assignment, identify any stipulations regarding length, citation format, the number of required sources (both primary and secondary), and, of course, the due date. Knowing this information will help you to plan your approach and allocate your time: You probably shouldn’t wait until Thursday night to begin outlining the six-page paper due in class on Friday. Having this information will also give you a sense of the extent and scope of your response: If you’re limited to three pages, you probably won’t be able to argue about the evolution of Los Angeles’s urban landscape from 1980 to the present; perhaps you could focus on a single aspect—building height—and hold off on the rest until your 25-page final. Identifying key information can also help you to plan your essay: The tone you adopt (Is it professional or conversational?) and the background that you provide are largely determined by your audience: Are you writing for your professor, your peers, or the general population? Your grasp of key information can help you to contour your approach.

**Your Approach** It goes without saying that assignments vary! Some professors will give you a detailed question to respond to, while others will ask you to come up with and respond to your own question. This variation can be perplexing. However, knowing how to approach either type of assignment can save you some anxiety.

Students often feel that a specific prompt requires a specific answer. This can be frustrating, especially if you feel that you don’t know that answer or that you’re being stifled into agreeing with your professor. While it may be the case that your prompt requires a particular answer, it is more likely that your professor will accept a variety of responses. Not only is it more interesting for your professors to evaluate 20 different responses (as opposed to 20 responses making the same point), but we also have it on good word that the joy of assigning essays comes from the variety of responses that such assignments elicit. Thus, while you should ask if you’re unsure whether your assignment wants a particular answer, take comfort in the fact that what matters most to most professors is often not the answer you give but how well you argue it.

When faced with a bare prompt, students often have the opposite frustration: They don’t know where to start! It can seem impossible to start on a paper when all that you’re given is: “Write an essay on a topic related to the concerns of the course” (or something to this effect). Though prompts like this one can seem daunting, they also give you the most intellectual and creative freedom. Your only constraint is your ability to shape an idea of yours into an argument of relevance to the course. Adopting this frame of mind can transform what seems daunting into a liberating opportunity to demonstrate your argumentative facility. If you find yourself stuck, think about what interests you most about your course topic and make some word or concept webs (see Chapter 4); you’re likely to find something worth writing about. If you’re still stuck, schedule a meeting with your professor, talk with a friend, or see a writing advisor at the CILT!

**Questions** It’s normal to have questions about your assignments. After you read through your prompt, note any questions that you have and ask your professor for clarification. When your professor realizes that they
accidentally wrote “single-spaced” instead of “double-spaced,” your classmates will thank you.

Here are some examples of real prompts that we’ve marked up with regard to the above information:

**Example 2.4.1 Short Paper (Short Prompt).**

This is a seven-page autobiographical essay in which you explore the framing of your identity as an individual within the context of diversity in the United States. Here you may explore any aspect of your upbringing, socialization, and family ties etc., to discuss the formation of your identity. As part of the process of developing this essay you are required to engage readings from the class that explore issues of identity.

—Courtesy of Dexter Gordon

Here we have a very short prompt for an essay of considerable length. As readers, we’ll begin by identifying the important aspects of the assignment: it must be seven pages; it must be autobiographical with respect to identity; it must engage readings from the class; and it must be situated in the context of diversity in the United States. The assignment is unique because it is autobiographical; because we don’t have much experience writing autobiographical essays, we might ask some of the following questions: How much detail should we provide? How personal can we be? What is the desired balance of autobiographical and scholarly writing? What does scholarly autobiographical writing look like? The benefit of prompts like this one is that they tend to be open-ended. We wouldn’t be surprised if the answer to the questions above are of the do-what-is-most-appropriate-to-the-point-you’re-making type. This type of freedom may be scary, but take advantage of the opportunity: write the essay that you want to write! There are, of course, some important details omitted; we would definitely need more information about the assignment’s due date, citation style, and audience. That kind of information is often offered in class when that assignment is made. Make sure to take good notes!

**Example 2.4.2 Engagement Papers (Medium Prompt).**

Middlemarch is a long novel that will take us several weeks to read (and more to digest); in addition, the bulk of the course is directed toward the seminar paper you will submit in May. To ensure that you are continually writing and processing ideas, each of you will write five Engagement Papers. The papers should be approximately 1000 words (~3 standard pages) and are due on Fridays (see schedule). At the end of each class, I will suggest possible topics to write on; I suggest you reserve a separate section of your notebook to jot these down. The general guidelines for each of the Engagement Papers are: (1) they should not simply regurgitate class discussion; instead, use our discussions as a jumping off point to delve deeper into an issue, topic, passage, chapter/section of the novel; (2) they should primarily be focused on that week’s reading, not on the readings of weeks ago. While you might certainly link developments in the week’s reading to previous sections of the novel, the focus should be on the current sections. Your papers will be graded foremost for their depth of analysis, but also for their clarity and
CHAPTER 2. HOW TO READ

style (these are formal papers).

—Courtesy of Priti Joshi

This prompt is helpful because it is explicit about its aims. The professor specifies, at the beginning, that the assignment is designed to “ensure that you [the student] are continually writing and processing ideas” in anticipation of the final, seminar paper. This information is useful, because it tells us that these essays are, for all intents and purposes, practice for the big one. The prompt is also explicit about what it expects: a paper of 1000 words, due every Friday, on the reading for that week, that engages with the novel in ways that go beyond class discussion. Finally, the assignment is transparent about its evaluative logic, with primary emphasis given to argument and secondary emphasis given to expression. There are, as always, some lingering questions, regarding, for instance, citation style and the use of secondary sources. These questions, however, are easily answered in class or during office hours.

Example 2.4.3 Long Paper (Long Prompt).

The mission-market tension in NGOs.

NGOs often face a tension between their charitable mission and purely pragmatic/financial imperatives. In class, we discuss several examples of these tensions, including:

- The implications of pressures from contracts with donors and governments,
- The problems due to competitive behavior between emergency relief NGOs
- The debate over how NGOs are best selected and evaluated.
- Can we cut or minimize intermediaries between charitable donors and the recipients of aid?

For this assignment, you must select one of these broad areas of investigation, and explore a specific and concrete question to expand on the class material. You can use one course reading as a starting point. Or you can go a different route, depending on your interests.

Sections: Please break your essay down into at least 3 or 4 sections (each with an informative title, starting with an introduction and a conclusion). This will make your paper much easier to follow than a single block of text.

Length: about 2,000 words, excluding bibliography.

Citations: As in any research paper, you must cite your sources properly and provide a formatted bibliography at the end. In IPE courses, students use the Chicago Style, Author-Date system, but you are free to follow the standard format (Chicago, APA, etc.) that you are used to in your major. Just be consistent.

Grading Criteria

Presentation of argument: Your thesis should be clear and the essay should be organized to defend it.

Presentation of evidence: The concrete examples you choose must be informative and illustrate your point.

Writing: Your writing should be clear and well organized.

Quality and breadth of sources: Pay close attention to the quality
and relevance of your sources. You need to have enough substantial academic (i.e., books and full-length academic articles) as well as short or long pieces you will find on good popular magazines, blogs. A general rule to follow may be a minimum of 8 academic sources PLUS as many relevant popular (blog/magazines/news) pieces you can find. There is a huge supply of popular writing on NGOs and philanthropy all over the internet, make sure you assess your sources appropriately. As far as academic materials go, there is a LOT of academic research (both in journal and book form) on NGOs, nonprofits and philanthropy.

—Courtesy of Pierre Ly

This essay prompt takes up a lot of space on the page, but it is actually shorter and less text-heavy than its length suggests. The prompt begins with an introductory statement summarizing some of the topics discussed in class and then asks you, the writer, to focus on one, formulate a question related to it, and to respond to that question by conducting research in both academic and popular sources. The prompt is open-ended and gives the writer the creative and scholarly license to pursue a project that interests them. This hands-off approach, we have noted, can be both liberating and, paradoxically, stifling. If you think that you’ll have trouble getting started, try one of the brainstorming strategies that we suggested in Section 4.1. As with all assignments, you’ll want to get started early. The prompt is comprehensive about the technical requirements of the paper. You may need to ask when the assignment is due and in what form (hard copy or electronic) if that information is not on the syllabus. Jot down these questions and any other questions you may have so that you do not forget to ask them. Finally, pay particular attention to the grading criteria. The professor has likely included this information to help you, the writer, to write a clear (not to mention high-scoring) essay. Because the prompt mentions four areas of assessment, be sure to make those areas as strong as possible.

Example 2.4.4 Another Potential Prompt (with lots of list-y questions).

**Writing Assignment: Transformations**

1. After reading Tobias Wolff’s memoir, *This Boy’s Life*, and viewing the film of the same name, write an essay in which you focus on one or more significant differences between scenes, characters, or other elements that appear in *both* the book and the screenplay. Does this change enhance or detract from the viewing experience of this memoir? In what ways? What meaning is meant to be conveyed? Be as specific as possible, using examples of language, imagery, music, etc.

2. Or you may wish to write about an obvious omission from the memoir, something important in the book which the filmmaker decided to leave out. What is gained, and what is lost? Which version tells the greater emotional truth in your opinion, and what is that truth(s)?

3. Or you may write about an original element of the film that is not part of the book’s narrative. Does it add to or fit within the “dramatic arc” of the story? In what ways? What meaning
is meant to be emphasized? Can you speculate about the filmmaker’s artistic choice?

Consider the nature of memory and what “fictional” license may be granted to an author? What parts of Wolff’s narrative might be invented and what do they add? Or do they? Use examples to make your points. What might be readers’ feelings toward a coming-of-age story? What is the role of catharsis in reading? How do we come out on the other side of loss or disappointment or even abuse?

This 3-page, double-spaced essay is a study in comparing and contrasting. The questions/suggestions above are largely to get you thinking about memoir. You may write in first person or third. You may include the effect of the book and/or movie on yourself. Whatever subject(s) you choose, keep your focus narrow, your exploration deep (rather than writing with a wide net). Remember that you are making a case (argument) for your opinion. Use examples from the text and film to back up your thesis or motive (which I hope will be the last sentence of the first paragraph).

Be sure to create an original title.

—Courtesy of Beverly Conner

This essay prompt poses a wealth of questions intended to give the writer a sense of what lines of inquiry would be intellectually rewarding. The prompt is generous in its suggestions and is deeply committed to the author’s creative agency, allowing the writer to choose, for instance, between adopting a first or third person voice. This commitment to authorial agency suggests that the essay is intended, at least in part, to be exploratory; it is intended to help the writer to further develop a sense of their scholarly voice and, perhaps, to experiment with a mode of rhetorical presentation not previously employed. Of course, the prompt pairs this commitment to freedom with a number of pointed argumentative and technical suggestions (“Keep your focus narrow, your exploration deep” and “I hope [the thesis] will be the last sentence of the first paragraph”) included to highlight the important and, in the former instance, less negotiable hallmarks of successful academic writing. The prompt also foregrounds the comparative aspect of the essay, cueing the reader, in so doing, to possible organizational schemes. Overall, this prompt is exceptionally supportive of the writer; it is clear about its expectations and respectful of the writer’s intellectual maturity and creative agency. It also differentiates, politely, between the creative options available to the writer and the more well-established expectations of academic writing.
Chapter 3

Forming Your Argument

All writing is driven by some kind of argument, be it a policy paper attempting to persuade the audience to adopt a certain stance, a lab report presenting the findings of an empirical study, or this sentence (which is arguing that all writing has an argument). As a writer, you have a purpose and an objective; why else would you write something at all? While writing and developing your ideas, it is therefore important to keep in mind why you are writing: to whom and for what purpose? Developing and articulating your argument is a necessary component of the writing process. While the transparency of your argument and the way it is presented may vary based on the discipline, class, professor, and even assignment, here are some basic tools you can use to develop and present your argument in an effective and logical way.

3.1 Elements of an Argument

After hours of poring over books and sifting through documents in Collins Library (and many cups of coffee from Diversions cafe), you finally hit upon an idea. The evidence corroborates it, and the logic is sound; your ideas align to form a stance that is at once distinctive and supportable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congrats!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have the beginnings of an argument. But how do you begin to articulate this argument in an effective and logical way? How do you use the evidence or findings to support your argument? How do you...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
address the concerns of potential naysayers? How do you know if your argument is too specific or too broad to be arguable? Developing your argument to fulfill all of these requirements is a difficult process and may even seem insurmountable at times. But don’t despair! Here are some basic things that every argument should have, regardless of writing type or discipline.

3.1.1 Main Claim: What is the main point you are trying to convey?

Every argument should be guided by a main point or central message. If you don’t know your main claim, try asking yourself questions like:

- “What is my main argument?”
- “What am I trying to prove or disprove?”

For instance, if you are writing an essay on the influence of caffeine consumption on college students, your main claim, or thesis, might be something like “Caffeine consumption has numerous positive benefits for the academic lives of college students.” This main claim will then likely be broken down into smaller supporting claims, each of which argues a different part of your main claim. For instance, a possible supporting claim of the statement above might be “Caffeine promotes student productivity by binding to adenosine receptors in the brain, preventing tiredness and extending hours of awakeness.” Another supporting claim could pose that “The consumption of caffeine as a critical facet of campus life creates a shared experience of camaraderie among students which, in turn, facilitates intellectual interaction and interdisciplinary collaboration.”

3.1.2 Evidence: What proof are you using to support your claims?

While having a main claim is critical in developing your argument, it is not enough to make an effective argument. You can’t just say something is true and assume the audience will accept it unconditionally. You also need to support these claims with evidence that can be used to illustrate or bolster your point. Oftentimes, your evidence will lead you to your central claim—let it! However, keep in mind that you will have to demonstrate how this evidence best lends itself to supporting your claim, so it’s important to use evidence that is relevant, valid, and clearly supports what you are trying to say. Evidence can come in several different forms, including numerical/empirical data, qualitative observations, ethnographic interviews, theoretical analysis, and prior studies derived from primary source material, scholarly journals, or personal experience.

To help you determine how your evidence supports your argument, try asking yourself questions like:

- “How does this evidence relate to my main claim?”
- “How will I use this evidence to illustrate my argument?”

For instance, potential pieces of evidence supporting the argument for the academic benefits of caffeine consumption could be the test scores or grade
point averages of caffeine addicts, experiential evidence offered by students who used caffeine to increase productivity, or the chemical reactions occurring in the brain that stimulate thinking and awareness.

3.1.3 Substantiation: Why does the evidence support your claims?

So you have a main claim, sub claims, and evidence to support them. Wouldn’t this be enough to make a strong argument? Not quite, because you often need something that connects your evidence to the claim.

In order to help you figure out how to substantiate your argument, you can ask yourself questions like:

- “Why is this evidence important?”
- “How does this piece of evidence support my claim?”
- “What connects the evidence to my main argument?”

For instance, you couldn’t just say, “Caffeine has positive academic benefits for college students” and “Caffeine promotes thinking and awareness” or “Caffeine leads to higher test scores”; in order to make this argument valid, there must be an implicit assumption that “Thinking and awareness and higher test scores are critical to academic success.” Therefore, in developing your argument, it’s helpful to remember that substantiation of the evidence is as important to your argument as the evidence itself.

3.1.4 Counterpoint: What are the limits of your argument?

No matter how effective or well-laid out an argument may be, it will always have some limitations. To help you identify areas of weakness in your argument, try asking yourself questions like:

- “What are the opposing arguments?”
- “Why are these counterpoints valid?”

For instance, a naysayer of the caffeine argument may bring up the potential negative health effects of caffeine addiction, which may lead to poorer student health and therefore poorer academic success. Rather than covering up these counterpoints or uncertainties and pretending they don’t exist, strong arguments confront potential naysayers head-on. By acknowledging areas of weakness in your argument, you actually strengthen your claim by setting yourself up to address and respond to other points of view. For instance, you might address the concerns of caffeine addiction by describing some of the negative health effects of caffeine dependence, such as sleep deprivation and withdrawal symptoms when caffeine is unavailable. You might even acknowledge that caffeine dependence may impact student academic success in the short term by promoting procrastination and enabling a series of all-nighters as compensation. However, you can also weaken and overturn these opposing arguments by asking yourself why your argument outweighs its counterpoints.

To help you determine how your argument might respond to opposing views, ask yourself questions like:

- “Why does my argument still hold true despite these counterpoints?”
- “Why do these counterpoints fall short of invalidating my argument?”
• “How might these counterpoints actually strengthen my own argument?”

For instance, the writer of the caffeine argument may both acknowledge and disable opposing viewpoints through the proposal that “While caffeine dependence may lead to some negative health effects, the ultimate academic benefits resulting from increased productivity outweigh the immediate impacts on student health and behavior.” This statement would then be followed by counterevidence displaying why the long term academic benefits of caffeine outweigh the negative health effects, and perhaps even how any negative health effects may actually generate academic success by spurring student performance and productivity.

After considering counterpoints, you may end up deciding that the counterpoints are more persuasive than your original point. That’s okay! It’s a sign of intellectual growth when you are able to reconsider your original views on the basis of further research. Just be sure to revise your paper so that the new argument is cohesive.

3.2 Diversity of Argumentation Modes

3.2.1 Different Models of Argumentation

While there are many different forms of argumentation, the four basic parts described above (main claim, evidence, substantiation, counterpoint) are key elements of many argumentative forms. However, these components can be interpreted differently in different disciplines (see Chapter 5) and for different assignments. For instance, the argument of a definitional or informational essay will employ language distinct from that of a scientific or philosophical study. A preferred argumentation form for your professor may not include language such as “main claim, evidence, substantiation, and counterpoint,” but may employ similar components that do similar things.

Similarly, there are many different models for structuring your argument. Some disciplines and professors use the Toulmin model of argumentation, which prioritizes evidence, claim, and warrants as the most critical parts of an argument. Others prefer the classical approach, which requires you to propose a certain stance, refute the opposing view, and offer proof to substantiate your claim. Still others may prefer you use the Rogerian model, which promotes a more neutral and compromising view of both sides of an argument. Unless a preference is indicated by your professor, use the model that makes the most sense for your assignment and argument. In fact, many writers use a hybrid between the different types while organizing their argument, using parts from each of them.

Perhaps you are writing an essay arguing whether coffee or tea is a better study stimulant for college students. You may use the Rogerian model to provide equal experiential evidence from people who drink coffee and people who drink tea, Toulmin’s data-driven analysis to argue that coffee people receive higher test grades, and then the classical approach to refute the argument that tea is a better study stimulant and substantiate your case for coffee. Mix it up!

3.2.2 Argumentation as Process

Argumentation is not static or linear; rather, it is a dynamic conversation between you and scholars who have preceded you. Regardless of the language and argumentation model you ultimately decide to use, it’s important to keep
in mind that the argumentative process is just that: a process of discovering, responding to, and contributing to existing knowledge. Your plan should be first to identify what others are saying and then to figure out a way to respond to them that keeps the scholarly conversation going. Who knows? Perhaps one day other scholars may even respond and contribute to your own argument.

### 3.3 Making a Strong Argument

Having the basic elements of an argument (main claim, evidence, substantiation, and counterpoint) is important, but that’s not all you can do to make your argument as strong as possible. The most effective arguments are specific, meaningful, arguable within the scope of the assignment, supported by firm lines of evidence, and contestable. While you are developing your argument, use the following questions to help you frame and strengthen it further.

**Argument Checklist.**

**Is it too broad/specific?** Arguments often start out broad in scope and then narrow as more and more evidence is collected. The trick is making sure an argument doesn’t stay too broad or become so narrow that it no longer becomes arguable. For instance, the argument “Rain influences people’s behavior” would be daunting to research and argue because people likely respond to rain in a number of different ways. On the other hand, the argument “Rain influences the walking rates of Puget Sound students in Tacoma, Washington, differently between the months of January and February” might be too specific a topic to gather substantive research on or make a meaningful claim about. Consider instead the argument “Rain has both positive and negative effects on students’ physical and emotional well-being.” This statement is both researchable and takes a clear stance about the influence of rain on student behavior.

**Is it arguable based on the available evidence?** In order to make a strong argument, you generally need a substantial amount of strong evidence to back it up. But let’s say you want to write about the negative effects of rainfall on the emotional well-being of Puget Sound students. You go to Collins Library, visit a liaison librarian, look through the shelves, skim around in Summit, and even peek into the archives, but the only thing you can find is a couple of articles published in *The Trail* in the early 2000s. This probably won’t be enough to substantiate your claim. Instead, you might try refining your argument to the negative effects of rainfall on the emotional well-being of college students in general. Suddenly, a mass of published scholarly sources on the subject appear on the Collins Library search engine. Hooray! You may now have enough evidence to substantiate your argument—and you’ll be creating new knowledge by considering how the general research applies in your particular context.
CHAPTER 3. FORMING YOUR ARGUMENT

Does the evidence support it? You also need to make sure the evidence available supports your argument. It’s important to listen to your evidence and let it point you in the direction of your argument rather than the other way around. For instance, if all of the evidence points toward the argument that “Rainfall promotes student productivity,” you likely wouldn’t argue the opposite (that “Rainfall reduces student productivity”). It’s also important to remember to use your evidence wisely. For example, if you find a piece of evidence showing that more students study in Collins Library during periods of heavy rainfall, it would be unwise to use this evidence to argue that students do not study in the library when it is nice outside. Let the evidence lead the way.

Is it contestable? A strong argument should be debatable and challenged by other viewpoints. The strength of your argument actually stems from how well you address these opposing views. For instance, if you were to argue that “Rain is condensed moisture falling from the sky,” there would be little room for debate because you are arguing a widely accepted fact. However, if you were to argue that “Students tend to focus more on homework assignments when it is raining,” those who feel that rain lessens productivity by motivating students to crawl into their warm beds might disagree.

Does it offer something new to the existing literature? One of the greatest challenges in developing your argument is making it unique and discernible from the arguments of previous studies or literature. Your argument should not be a mere rehashing of someone else’s opinion or conclusions but should rather use these findings as evidence to support your own claim about a topic. It’s also helpful if your argument is interesting enough to hold your attention throughout the research and writing process; otherwise, you may find yourself bored a few pages into the assignment! For instance, the above argument “Rain is condensed moisture falling from the sky” would be pretty boring to write about and has already been supported by numerous scientific studies. In contrast, the alternative argument “Students tend to focus more on homework assignments when it is raining” is interesting, takes a stance on a certain topic, and is likely less well-supported than the previous statement. It’s your argument, so own it!

Does it respond to the prompt/assignment? Even if you have a brilliant argument, it’s important to remember that it needs to respond to your prompt or assignment (see Section 2.4). If the prompt asked you to “assess the influence of rainfall on student academic productivity,” you likely wouldn’t argue that “the weather during a prospective student’s campus tour influences their decision to attend Puget
Some professors are more particular about their assignment prompts or rubrics than others and may have specific guidelines or requirements that you will need to take into account as you construct your argument. In situations when you notice that your argument has shifted away from the prompt, resist the feeling that you must stifle your argument to “fit the requirements”; try to perceive those situations as opportunities to articulate your argument in a way that both satisfies the assignment and preserves your voice. One way to do this is to imagine your argument as an open dialogue with your professor rather than simply a response to a prompt.

### 3.4 Developing a Thesis

So you’ve been given a writing assignment. You’ve read Section 2.4 on how to read writing prompts, and you’ve begun thinking about the components of a good argument, but now what? In order to structure your paper effectively and to know what supporting claims it needs, you need to have a main claim or thesis. A thesis is an argumentative, contestable statement that tells an audience exactly what a writer intends to argue (for more information, see Subsection 4.3.2).

The thesis is thus the main point of your paper. Writing a paper without a thesis is like trying to drive a car without tires; the body will be there, but you certainly won’t be taking your reader anywhere important. Good theses do everything good tires should do: they get you moving smoothly, give you traction, and make your arguments a lot more appealing and convincing to audiences. It’s difficult to start writing without a working thesis, but once you have an idea of your main argument, you’ll be writing in no time. The thesis
also provides you with the foundation of and traction for your argument. If you ever find yourself asking, “Wait, what am I even writing about?” you can refer back to your thesis. Alternatively, you might realize that what you’re saying doesn’t align with your thesis, so you might rewrite your thesis—change your tires—altogether! Finally, a good, thorough thesis indicates to the audience that you are an authoritative and careful writer, one who establishes an argument outright and has evidence to support it. Just like a car without tires, a paper without a thesis is odd and ineffective.

As a scholar in training, your theses represent your contributions to the broader academic conversations in which they take part. Just as with spoken conversations, you don’t want the contributions you make to scholarly conversations to be repetitions of what other people have said. Your thesis must therefore be a new, interesting idea that you’ve come up with. While this endeavor sounds near impossible—how can I, as a mere scholar in training, contribute to a conversation with professional and practiced scholars?—you needn’t worry. You don’t have to make a life-changing contribution, and you surely don’t need to know every argument that has ever been made on your topic. What you do need to do is develop a research question, research that question, and form a thesis that crystallizes your ideas and findings. Although your paper may be simply another writing assignment that you hope to finish and forget, you might consider thinking about your thesis as an opportunity to develop an idea that legitimately falls within a scholarly conversation.

Now, how do you go about writing your thesis? Since your thesis is the main point of your argument, you may find it difficult and time consuming to construct the perfect sentence (or two!). Strategies to develop your thesis are therefore very important. Let’s start from the beginning.

A note before we begin: It is important that you write down every version of your thesis. You don’t want to have a brilliant idea only to forget it five minutes later; sometimes old versions of your thesis can be useful in crafting newer versions.
3.4.1 Six-Step Process

Step 1: Articulate your idea. Your idea will most likely be guided by your class, professor, or assignment. You may have a range of topics or prompts to choose from, so think through each option carefully and determine which idea interests you most.

Let’s say that you choose a prompt directing you to argue for or against this statement: “I should be able to own as many cats as I want.” You’re interested in learning more about why cat ownership shouldn’t be regulated, so your idea is to argue in favor of the statement.

Step 2: Gather knowledge. In order to make any kind of claim about your idea, you must first gather information on your topic. This knowledge can come in a variety of forms, including textual analysis, data gathering, or scholarly research. Your discipline or assignment will probably dictate what type of knowledge you need to gather. If in doubt, ask your professor.

For your cat assignment, let’s say that the knowledge you need to gather will come from scholarly journals. After scouring all of the top academic cat journals, you compile a number of sources that describe the woes of rampant cat homelessness. You find other sources that argue that cats should be bought and sold like consumer goods. As you learn from more reading, the ability to purchase consumer goods is something Americans value as a right.

Step 3: Identify a pattern. Patterns in your research can come in many forms. You might find a topic or argument that is repeatedly in conflict with another topic or argument, a source that provides an unexpected argument, or a new way to combine arguments or ideas.

In your cat-journal research, you find that cat homelessness is a major problem throughout the world. You also realize that you can combine the first argument, that cats should be bought like consumer goods, and the second argument, that Americans value purchasing consumer goods as a right.

Step 4: Formulate a question that responds to the prompt. Now you must think about your research and idea in the context of your assignment. Your question will vary depending on the format of the prompt. If the prompt itself is a question, your question might be a more specific version of the prompt. If the prompt offers up ideas or guidelines, then your question will need to adhere to those ideas or guidelines. Regardless of the format, your question will most likely ask for explanations about why, what about, or how your evidence relates to your claim.

Recall the prompt: Argue for or against the statement “I should be able to own as many cats as I want.”

You come up with the question: “Why should I be able to purchase as many cats as I want?”

Step 5: Listen to the evidence. The evidence will guide you to your claim—let it! While it may be tempting to pick and choose evidence that supports the claim that you want to make, strong academic argumentation requires researchers to make claims validated and substantiated by a fair and thorough examination of the available evidence. By listening to the evidence, you ensure that your claim answers your question honestly and opens a dialogue with which other researchers can engage.
Step 6: Develop a working thesis. The claim you devised in Step 5 will become your working thesis. A working thesis is the initial thesis you come up with, and it will guide your subsequent research. That research will, in turn, help you reformulate your working thesis as your research changes and your understanding of your topic, evidence, and main claim shifts. Your research isn’t done when you formulate your working thesis, so keep researching and rewriting!

If my working thesis and my research form an unending cycle, then how do I know when my thesis is ready? A solid thesis often does MORE.

- Makes a clear assertion of your main claim
- Offers the kinds of evidence you will be using
- Reflects the general organization of your argument/paper
- Explains how you will use your evidence to support your claim
Sometimes, one sentence isn’t enough space to contain all of these things. If your thesis has depth and complexity, you likely will find yourself needing two or three sentences, or even a small paragraph, to fully explicate your thesis. Take this space and make it yours! However, if you find your thesis is taking up paragraphs, this may be an indication that you need to pare it down to make it more manageable. If you have more questions about thesis development and whether or not yours is “ready,” make an appointment at the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLT)!

Consider the following example theses from Puget Sound student papers. In what ways do they or do they not do MORE?

**Example 3.4.1** While women do have a substantial presence in the *Odyssey*, the characters of Helen, Penelope, and Athena reify patriarchal norms regarding the role of the feminine in society by positing themselves below the authority and sovereignty of male characters. Coupled with the epic’s clear celebration of warfare, the *Odyssey* primarily reinforces the chauvinist framework through which we view the world.

---

**Example 3.4.2** The relationship between the two debates was forged by the underlying theme concerning access to the government; universal male suffrage was a microcosm of the tension between the principle of majoritarianism and the preservation of minority rights concerning their places within the government. This question would significantly shape the political discourse in the United States for much of the nineteenth century.

---

**Example 3.4.3** The Immigration Act of 1965 effectively restructured the United States’ immigration policies in such a way that no group, minority or majority, was singled out by being discriminated against or given preferential treatment in terms of its ability to immigrate to America.

---

**Example 3.4.4** In an excerpt from his book *The Will to Believe*, James successfully disproves Clifford’s argument, explained in his article “The Ethics of Belief,” revealing that, under certain circumstances, it’s moral and rational to believe something without evidence.
3.5 Organization of an Argument

At this point in the development of your argument, you should have a working thesis and multiple supporting claims. Now you must think about your argument from the point of view of your audience. Arguments must be organized in a way that audiences can logically follow. Your main goal as a writer is to organize your argument logically and convincingly enough that a reader will be persuaded by what you’ve written. Because argument organization varies between papers and subjects, you need to figure out what your audience will need and want while reading through your argument.

Consider asking yourself these questions:

- “What pieces of your argument does an audience need in order to make sense of the following parts?”
- “Do the pieces of your argument need to build on each other in a certain way?”
- “Should you organize your supporting claims chronologically? By order of importance?”

Now, to answer these questions, you have a few options.

- Make a few different outlines (see Section 4.2).
- Write your supporting claims on notecards and organize them a few different ways.
- Map out your ideas by drawing connections between your claim, supporting claims, and evidence.
- Talk through your argument with someone, perhaps a writing advisor at the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching! (It might also be helpful to take notes during/record the conversation so you have content from the conversation to use as you return to writing and organizing.)
- Ask yourself, “Which one seems the most logical?”
- Ask a friend or peer to look at your organizational schemes to see what he or she thinks is most logical.

3.6 Using Evidence to Support an Argument

To be convincing, an argument must have compelling evidence linked and supported with clear analysis. Strong arguments are thoroughly reasoned and continuous in their analysis of evidence, which is sometimes challenging, but it helps to keep a few principles in mind: Notice-Think-Write and the Quote Sandwich.

Consider the following construction, which is neither thoroughly reasoned nor continuous:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Though they are in the same geographic space, Adele and her addressee are separated on a nonspatial level by an otherworldly emotional distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3. FORMING YOUR ARGUMENT

Evidence.

In “Hello,” Adele sings, “I’m in California dreaming … / … / There’s such a difference between us / And a million miles” (10-11).

In “Hello,” Adele sings, “I’m in California dreaming … / … / There’s such a difference between us / And a million miles” (10-11). Though they are in the same geographic space, Adele and her addressee are separated on a nonspatial level by an otherworldly emotional distance.

Okay, what the Grizz is going on? Though the intuitive reader may be able to follow the writer’s logic, this argument lacks the analysis necessary to explicitly connect the evidence to the claim; because it lacks this analysis, the argument is not as convincing as it could be. How can the writer better analyze the text to make their point? Let’s consider the following three-step principle.

1. Notice. Effective analysis identifies the specific elements of the evidence that point to the claim being made.

   Look over the lyrics to Adele’s “Hello.” Notice anything that stands out to you and anything you think might be meaningful for the song. Pay attention to language, syntax (sentence structure), logic, and other formal or thematic aspects. For instance, I might think that when Adele sings “a million miles” she’s exaggerating just a little.

2. Think. Effective analysis is predicated on “how” and “why” questions. Ask yourself these types of questions to move from the realm of identifying to that of speculating.

   Let’s think about some things that we noticed: What do these rhetorical, aesthetic, logical, or formal choices mean, or how do they contribute to the meaning of the text? Pay attention to how form and content intersect. For example, I might look at the phrase “a million miles” and think that, since the earth is only 8,000 miles in diameter, Adele’s longing for this person is otherworldly, or exceeds the bounds of earthly description.

   The song tells us that Adele’s in California and that the person she’s addressing is “a million miles away.” I wonder: What’s a million miles away from California? I Google the earth’s diameter and find that it’s roughly 8,000 miles in diameter. I do some math to determine where a million miles from California is. But one million divided by 8,000 comes out evenly—125. So Adele’s addressee is in California as well, or at least in the area. Then I think, Adele is referring to the distance and not the displacement between herself and her addressee. Thus, though the displacement between Adele and her addressee is 0, the figural distance between them is equal to eight times the earth’s diameter. The phrase “a million miles” then encodes, ironically, that, though they are close to each other geographically, Adele and her addressee are separated on a nonspatial level by an otherworldly emotional distance.

3. Write. Now that you’ve thought about the things you noticed, put your thoughts into words. It can be helpful to speak your thought process while
you’re writing, just to be as specific as possible.

In “Hello,” Adele’s use of hyperbole reveals the otherworldly intensity of her longing; she sings, “I’m in California dreaming ... / ... / There’s such a difference between us / And a million miles” (10-11). The phrase “a million miles” is an exaggerated estimation of the distance between Adele and the person whom she addresses. The use of “California” as a geographical marker suggests that the person Adele is addressing is a million miles away from California. However, the earth is only 8,000 miles in diameter. One million divided by 8,000 is 125 with no remainder. Assuming the person Adele is addressing is also somewhere on earth, the “million miles” between Adele and her addressee actually locates the addressee in California. “A million miles” must then refer to a distance, as opposed to a displacement, suggesting that though the displacement between Adele and her addressee is 0, the figural distance between them is equal to 125 times the earth’s diameter. The phrase “a million miles” then encodes, ironically, that, though they are in the same geographic space, Adele and her addressee are separated on a nonspatial level by an otherworldly emotional distance.

(You’ll want to make your thought process as transparent as possible so that others can respond to your argument. For instance, someone could respond to the above argument by saying that a person could travel a million miles in a nonlinear fashion such that Adele and her addressee could as likely be 4,000 miles apart as they are 0 miles apart.)

And you’re done! By following this simple, three-step process, the writer comes up with a coherent and thoroughly reasoned analysis that connects evidence to claim in a convincing way.

**Quote Sandwiches.** Formally speaking, there are certain conventions that academics like to follow when dealing with evidence. For instance, it is considered inelegant to use advice without introducing it first. Luckily, you just need to keep in mind the “quote sandwich,” and you’ll never make that inelegant mistake.

The quote sandwich is nothing more than a three-part organizational template that consists of the following parts:

- The upper bun of your quote sandwich introduces the quotation under consideration with information about its author and source and with the claim that you’re making about it.
- The meat, or non meat substitute, of your sandwich consists of your quote with a proper in-text citation.
- The bottom bun of your sandwich consists of your thorough analysis of the evidence.
You may have noticed that the written analysis in the previous section was rendered in three different colors. These colors represent different parts of the quote sandwich. The clause in green introduces the quotation that follows it and anticipates the argument that will be made about the evidence in the section in purple. The text in red is the quotation introduced by the clause in green and commented on by the text in purple. The text in purple analyzes the text in red and elaborates on the claim forecasted by the text in green.

Quote sandwiches are exceedingly accessible (and tasteful!) ways to structure your in-paragraph arguments.

Take some time to practice the above strategies on your own. When you’re done, take a quick break and watch everyone’s favorite nature video personality, Sir David Attenborough, narrate the beginning of the “Hello” music video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enu-qR0H_uk

Pro Tip. Recommended sandwich combination(s) at the SUB:
• Focaccia bread  • Whole wheat bread  • Rye bread
• Salami  • Turkey  • Pesto
• Swiss cheese  • Swiss cheese  • Mayo
• Leaf lettuce  • Pesto  • Provolone cheese
• Pickles  • Hummus  • Tomatoes
• Onion  • Spinach  • Pickles
• Tomato  • Pickles  • Black olives
• Ranch (optional)  • Olives  • Leaf lettuce
• Toast that sandwich!  • TOAST IT!

List 3.6.1: Sandwich A  List 3.6.2: Sandwich B  List 3.6.3: Sandwich C
Chapter 4

The Writing Process

While writing can be a difficult process, it often feels more daunting before you start than when you are actually doing it. If you are intimidated by the thought of writing (as many are), you may find reassurance in this nugget of wisdom: The writing process is not just about writing! In actuality, the writing process starts long before you write anything on the page and continues long after you’ve written your first draft. Just as developing your argument is a process, so too is translating that argument into written form. A significant portion of the writing process is composed of research, argument development, brainstorming, planning, and outlining, all of which take place before you begin composing content. And even after you’ve finished a draft, you may spend just as much or more time revising, editing, and changing your paper as you spent writing it. The writing process is messy, uncertain, and chock-full of switchbacks, revisions, and gaps in the road, but it can also be empowering, rewarding, and manageable if you take it one step at a time.

4.1 Brainstorming

Before you begin to write, first think about how you like to think. Do you prefer talking through your ideas? Writing down everything that’s going through your mind? Drawing? Mapping? There is no right or wrong way to brainstorm. Figure out what works best for you, and then use that knowledge to develop brainstorming skills that are specific to you.
Some Brainstorming Strategies.

- Talk to a friend about your topic, ideas, and potential arguments.
- Draw a picture of your argument in order to develop it.
- Freewrite for 15 minutes everything you know about your topic and then try to organize those ideas into conceptual clusters.
- Jot down a list of bulleted words or phrases about your topic and then circle the ones that are most interesting to you.
- Make a list of questions about your topic (who, what, when, where, why, how) and see which ones you can answer, which ones have multiple answers, and which ones you lack information for.
- Write down your topic and approach it from five different directions of analysis: Describe it, locate it within context, apply it to your life/current events, compare it to another topic, argue for/against it.
- Put your topic in the center of an idea map, and then make a branch for each idea that you have.
- Do some preliminary research about your topic and make note of any trends or patterns you observe.
- Think about your topic while you are doing something else, like yoga, cooking, or reading a book for pleasure.

What were the social and political causes of the Russian Revolution?
4.2 Planning

So now that you have a ton of ideas all jockeying for attention in your brain, it’s time to sit down, consolidate those thoughts, and plan out what you are going to write. But before you can begin, there are a few things you’ll need to address that will help make the planning process go as smoothly and productively as possible.
4.2.1 Pre-planning Questions

**Determine the purpose of your paper** Why are you writing? What is meaningful about your argument? How does it answer or respond to the prompt?

**Identify your audience** Who are you writing for? Your peers? Your professor? Yourself? Identifying your audience is key in helping you frame your argument and determine what is most important for audience comprehension. For most academic papers, your audience will be the greater academic community, which includes your peers and professor. Sometimes, your professor may identify your audience for you. If you have any questions about your audience, remember that it’s always best to ask your professor for clarification.

**Decide on content** What will your paper be about? What content will you include in your paper to make your argument? What evidence will you use to substantiate your claims? While the content will likely change as you move through the writing process, figuring out what information you need will help you identify what you want to write about and whether you need to conduct more research before you begin writing.

**Figure out a format** How will you format your paper? Is it a descriptive essay? An argumentative paper? Compare-contrast? Or perhaps a close reading of a primary source? In order to help you answer this question, go back to the assignment prompt and figure out what it is asking for. This will help you determine the most appropriate structure for your paper and argument.

**An important note!** Don’t feel confined by the “Five-Paragraph Essay” you may have learned in middle/high school! This basic format is insufficient for college, and professors will encourage you to break free of it in your writing responses. Rather than letting this intimidate you, try to view it as a liberation: Let the complexity and nuance of your argument guide you toward the structure that works best for you.

**Start thinking about style** Before you begin writing, it’s helpful to think about the tone of your essay—the language you’re going to use, how objective or subjective you will be, from which point of view you will write. For instance, you probably wouldn’t write a chemistry lab report using the same language that you would use to write a personal narrative. Deciding on a voice early on can help you figure out what kind of language to use while you are planning, outlining, and drafting your paper.

4.2.2 Some Planning Strategies

There are several planning strategies to help you bridge the gap between the disorganized chaos of brainstorming and the more comprehensible structure of outlining:
Create a mind map. Mind maps can help you organize your ideas further by identifying different parts of your argument and drawing connections between them. Start with your main idea or topic in the center of the page. Then write down subheadings for everything you think is important for understanding your argument around this main idea. Then write down the pieces of evidence or the reasons you believe your argument beneath each of these subheadings. Finally, use arrows, pictures, or words to draw connections between the main idea, subheadings, and pieces of evidence. For a more visual approach, draw heavier lines or multiple arrows between the relationships that are the strongest so you can identify where your argument is the most convincing. Ask yourself questions like:

- Do your subheadings all lead to the main idea?
- Are they all supporting one part of the argument or do they support different parts?
- Do they offer different or competing perspectives?
- Are they all using similar evidence or do they draw from a variety of sources?
- Are there any connections between the subheadings? Between the pieces of evidence?
- Does all of your evidence come from the same source? (This might be okay in an assignment like a close reading or analysis of a primary source, but things like research papers often require a variety of different sources. Look to your assignment sheet for more guidelines on how many/what kind of sources to use.)
- Is there any information or evidence you want to include but don’t know where to put? Is it necessary for your argument? (Create a list of these off to the side so you don’t forget them.)
Freewrite. Another great way to start planning to write your paper is to write! In the freewriting method, write down everything you can think about your topic: thesis, claims, evidence, areas of uncertainty, logic gaps, anything you know you will have to address while writing your paper. Don’t worry about formatting or grammar or sentence styling or whether your writing “looks good”—those will come later. For now, try to focus on the content of your argument: What do you want to argue, what evidence do you have to argue it, and what do you want the audience to get out of your paper? Freewriting can be useful for helping you figure out what you truly want to write about, and oftentimes your argument and thesis may even change after you’ve let the pencil wander aimlessly. Let it! This is proof that you are actively thinking about and revising your argument, which is a crucial part of the writing process.

If you’re having trouble getting started, here are some prompts to help you get going:

- “I think that ...”
- “My topic is ...”
- “I am interested in ...”
- “I would like to know more information about ...”

Draw. If you’re a more artistic person, you might also experiment with illustrating your argument. Depending on the type of argument you’re making and the class you’re writing for, you could draw the main characters, historical figures, or events and then make the appropriate connections between them. Similarly, if your argument is more linear, sequential, or chronological, you could draw a different, comic-stylized picture for each step of your argument. You do you!
4.3 Outlining

While outlining might take up precious writing time in your schedule, the payoff is worth it! By clearly organizing your ideas in a way that makes sense to you, you give yourself a guide to follow while you’re writing. The act of making an outline also requires you to write down all of your brilliant ideas so that, by the time you start writing, you don’t forget what you’ve come up with. Use what you’ve developed during your brainstorming and planning sessions to create a more cohesive, organized, and complete outline that contains the major parts of your argument: your introduction, thesis, supporting claims, evidence, and conclusion. Remember that while ordering your claims you should try to think of your essay as a progression rather than a series of points; each claim should both respond to and build off of the previous one. Just as with brainstorming, your outline can be in any form that works best with the structure of the assignment and the way you want to think about your paper. While you’re creating your outline, ask yourself these types of questions:

- Do each of your claims follow a purposeful pattern or sequence?
- Is this pattern chronological? Logic-based? In order of importance? Compare-contrast?
- Are you giving your audience everything it needs to fully understand your argument?
- Does the order of your claims merely list points or does it culminate toward a larger argument?
- Does your argument naturally follow from the claims you presented, in the order you presented them?
- Does the order of your claims roughly follow the arrangement of your thesis?

Here are a few (but not all!) format options to try:

4.3.1 The Classic Outline

The classic outline is potentially the one you’re most familiar with. Many people prefer to outline in this structure because it is very linear, organized, and clear. After constructing a thorough outline in this format, virtually all
a writer needs to do is fill in the gaps with prose. If you think linearly, need more structure when organizing your ideas, or prefer to have the skeleton of your paper completed before you begin writing, the classic outline might be the outline for you.

4.3.2 The Bubble Map

The bubble map is a great option for writers who prefer a less-structured organization or a more organic relationship between ideas. Bubble maps also enable you to conceptualize your claims in a dynamic way, which can be beneficial for papers or topics that have several claims that can be connected to each other differently.

4.3.3 The Flowchart

Flowcharts work well for people who like (or papers that require) the organization and structure of a classic outline but need the organic, concept-based
connections of a bubble map. Flowcharts show both linear and more circular connections between points. You can begin with your thesis at the top of the chart, or you may opt to do a mini-flowchart for each paragraph with topic sentences at the top. Your argument progresses with each descending bubble on the chart, but you still have the flexibility to show connections between claims and pieces of evidence in concert with the linear flow of your argument.

4.4 Introductions

4.4.1 Role of the Introduction (Road Map)

While first impressions are not always accurate, you usually don’t get a second chance to impress your audience in writing. This is why the introduction of your paper is just as important as the body paragraphs and conclusion; it is the “road map” of your argument, the first thing your audience will read, and the part that will determine whether or not your audience will continue reading. Therefore, it’s important to have a strong introduction to introduce your argument, lay out the expectations of your paper, and convince your audience members why they should care enough to read on. To this end, there are a few things you should include in your introduction to make it as effective as possible.
4.4.2 Anatomy of the Introduction

Common Ground. It’s important to begin your introduction with a nice, firm handshake with the audience, which often comes in the form of establishing common ground. Your common ground should do two things: 1) introduce your topic, and 2) establish yourself as an authority on the topic at hand. Common ground is usually established in the form of a factual, uncontroversial statement that is likely familiar to your audience and which may comfortably orient them to your topic. It may also introduce the works, authors, and sources you will be using by drawing an observational similarity between them.

- “Many people believe this [common ground].”
- “Both this source and this source examine this critical issue or use this popular trope [common ground].”

Posing the Problem. Once you have established common ground, you are now free to interrupt or destabilize this common ground with your main question or problem. This question or problem should arise from a common trend or pattern you uncover within the research; perhaps something you observe in the research does not adhere to common thought, has not been framed in a certain way, or has not been studied at all. Therefore, the question or problem you pose should occur within the context of a broader scholarly conversation. You can pose your problem by drawing a distinction between the audience’s expectation and reality, pointing to startling similarities or differences between your sources, or complicating the common ground statement with a more nuanced or holistic perspective of the issue. To highlight this problem, you can use words and phrases like “however,” “although,” “while,” or “in actuality.”

- “Many people believe this [common ground], however they may not have thought of it like this [problem].”
- “While both of these sources examine this [common ground], one actually does this while the other does not [problem].”

Stating the problem should do two things: 1) acknowledge the reader’s incomplete knowledge of the topic, and 2) illuminate to the audience that there is a tangible consequence to their ignorance. By associating a consequence with the stated problem, you will encourage the reader to keep reading your paper in an attempt to rectify their ignorance and avoid any consequent costs. Another way to articulate consequence is to pose to the audience the potential benefits to be gained by resolving the problem and improving their understanding of the topic.
• “Recently, however, studies have begun to show this new thing [incomplete knowledge]. Without furthering our understanding of this thing, we may fail to perceive its true implications [consequence/cost].”

• “Many of these sources examine this issue in the same way [incomplete knowledge]. However, if we look at it in this new way, we may be able to achieve a deeper, more nuanced perspective on the issue [consequence/benefit].”

Response to the Problem (Thesis). After destabilizing the common ground by posing the problem and stating the potential consequences of incomplete knowledge, you may now give your audience members some stable footing (don’t just leave them hanging!). You can do this by providing the audience with your resolution to the stated problem—this is also known as your thesis statement (for tips on thesis development, see Section 3.4). Your thesis statement should include a clear assertion of your argument that reflects the general organization of the paper, what kinds of information you will be using, and how you will be using that information to make your argument.

There are different ways you may frame your thesis statement. You can offer the solution as the main point of the paper, promising to explicate it in depth throughout your response; this is called a “point-first” structure. You may also want to detail the problem at length, explore various solutions, and finally offer a solution at the very end of the paper; this structure is called “point-last.” Whichever structure you choose should be the one best suited to your argument and what you want the main focus of your paper to be.

4.4.3 Strategies for Writing Effective Introductions

Now that you have the basic tools you need to write an effective introduction, here are some tips and strategies to get you in the intro-writing mood.

Introductions shouldn’t necessarily be written first! Even though it appears first in your paper, the introduction is generally not the first thing you write. Oftentimes you need to have a solid thesis and some of your body paragraphs—maybe even your whole paper—before you begin writing your introduction. Your introduction is supposed to prepare the reader for what to expect in your paper, so it’s usually better to wait to write it until you have a really strong idea of where you’re headed. This being said, if you feel like writing the introduction will help you develop a path forward, go for it! Just keep in mind that it will likely change as you move through the rest of your paper.

Consider your introduction the “road map” to your paper. While writing your introduction, you should prepare the audience for what’s ahead. To this end, your thesis should reflect the general organization of your argument. However, if you find you need more room to elaborate on the paper’s organization, you may also find it helpful to include a clear road map for what you plan to accomplish. For instance, “First, I will explore this issue. Then, I will look at the issue from this perspective. Finally, I will bring these two first parts together to examine the issue in this way.” Don’t be afraid to tell the audience exactly what they should expect from you and your argument; doing so establishes you as the authority, provides your audience with a compass to guide them through your paper, and disables the risk of any surprises sneaking through that may take your audience off guard.
Introductions can be multiple paragraphs. Especially for longer responses, such as research papers, you may find that the introduction of your topic and explanation of the problem takes a few paragraphs—that’s okay! You may not even get to your thesis until a page or so in. Depending on the recommended length of your paper, this may be appropriate to the scope of your argument. It’s also okay if you feel you are putting too much in the introduction—first write as much as you feel is necessary to get to your thesis statement, then go back and see if there is anything that could justify its own body paragraph or that may not be as necessary to your introduction as you originally thought.

Start with something concise, engaging, and applicable. Crafting the opening sentence of your introduction can be a daunting task, especially as it sets the tone for your argument, introduces the topic of your paper, and is the first thing your audience will read. Thinking about how broad or specific to start can be useful in helping you figure out the appropriate scope for your introduction. For instance, many introductions start with a broader statement and then narrow in scope as they begin to focus in on the specific problem and the thesis. While this structure is useful, it’s important to keep in mind that the “broader” opening statement should still be specific to your topic, interesting, and relevant to what you will be discussing. For example, you probably shouldn’t start a research paper about the destruction of the Sundarbans mangrove forest with the opening statements, “Forests are inherently valuable to mankind” or “Mankind is destroying the Earth’s natural resources.” Both of these statements are too broad to generate much interest and don’t really indicate what the paper will be about. Consider instead the opening statement:

“Comprising the largest block of mangrove forest globally and accounting for 3% of global mangrove area, the Sundarbans of Eastern India and Bangladesh are biogeographically, ecologically, and culturally unique in their species biodiversity and ecosystem services.”

This statement is specific, interesting, and introduces the topic at hand. However, it’s also broad enough to hint at the bigger picture while opening the floor to a more specific problem or insight. While there are a variety of different ways to craft an interesting and relevant opening to your introduction, there are some opening statement types that are generally too broad, obvious, informal, over-used, or boring to be employed in academic writing and, as a result, should be avoided. (However, it’s important to remember that the type of opening statement obviously depends on the discipline and type of writing assignment; therefore, rather than strictly adhering to this list, use it as a guide.)
Opening Statements to Avoid in Academic Writing.

- Vague and sweeping statements (“Since the dawn of mankind ...,” “Since the beginning of time ...,” “The truth is ...,” “Writers have always ...”)
- Restated questions (“Is the sky blue? Yes, it is.”)
- Quotes, especially quotes that are not directly related to the content of the paper (“Helen Keller once said, “Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.””)
- Definitions, with the exception of very specialized definitions that are at the heart of your argument (“According to the Merriam-Webster definition ...”)
- Clichés or common adages (“History repeats itself ...,” “Once upon a time ...”)
- Citing a statistic (“98% of people believe ...”)

Instead, try beginning with some of the following opening statement types.

Effective Opening Statements.

- Describe a location, person, scene, or anecdote.
- Elucidate an interesting example.
- Highlight a startling fact, paradox, or puzzling insight.
- Challenge a publicly accepted assumption.
- Provide relevant and interesting information about the historical time period/setting.
- Offer a provocative statement of the problem.

For more ideas on how to begin, organize, and end introductions, take a look at the following examples by Puget Sound students. What do you see as
the strengths and weaknesses of these examples? Make sure to note the thesis statements (underlined) and opening statements:

**Example 4.4.1** Discourse has profound effects on how we view reality, particularly in regard to gender roles. Due to our society’s political correctness, much of the sexism that pervades modern thought is implicit; commentators make thinly veiled metaphors instead of declarations. This implicit bias is nothing new, as it dates back to ancient times. Many literary critics have embraced Homer’s *Odyssey* as a departure from the explicit sexism of pre-Judea Greece, claiming that the centrality of female characters to the epic poem is a formal challenge to the ivory-laden walls of male domination. While women do have a substantial presence in the *Odyssey*, the characters of Helen, Penelope, and Athena reify patriarchal norms regarding the role of the feminine in society by positing themselves below the authority and sovereignty of male characters. Coupled with the epic’s clear celebration of warfare, the *Odyssey* primarily reinforces the chauvinist framework through which we view the world.

**Example 4.4.2** In early nineteenth-century America, the market revolution raised questions about the nature of a democratic republic. This political discussion was brought about by the development of an industrial working class, landless, economically dependent, and steadily increasing. While the “majority” within the United States during this time period did not consist solely of economically dependent industrial workers, they were becoming a larger percentage of the majority as the country continued to industrialize—and were beginning to clamor for more representation in the government. This posed a threat to the wealthy, economically independent class of rich landowners, businessmen, and lawyers who had traditionally held government office. Facing increasing numbers of the industrial class, the politically established sought for ways to maintain their political influence. Essentially, the two classes were debating over the answer to the fundamental question regarding which group, the majority or the minority, should have greater access to governmental power. Within the greater context of this dispute, universal male suffrage was a smaller topic that reflected the same tensions revolving around this extremely significant political question. The relationship between the two debates was forged by the underlying theme concerning access to the government; universal male suffrage was a microcosm of the tension between the principle of majoritarianism and the preservation of minority rights concerning their places within the government. This question would significantly shape the political discourse in the United States for much of the nineteenth-century.

**Example 4.4.3** Immigration has been synonymous with the United States of America since the days of the founding fathers. In the ten years following 1980, 668,866 European immigrants moved away from their homes, their families, and their jobs to craft new lives in the United States. During the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the Immigration Act of 1965 removed the discriminatory quota system from United States immigration laws. The quota system was undesirable for a variety of reasons. One key cause at the core of the quest to change this system was that it allowed only a specific proportion of immigrants into the country. This proportion was representative not of the populous of the country in 1965, but of what America had looked like after the census of 1920. To put this into perspective, the number of immigrants allowed into the country from Western Europe was vastly greater than the number of immigrants allowed into the country from Asia and Eastern Europe, leading some to believe that racial stereotyping played some part in immigration.

The Immigration Act placed a cap on the number of immigrants entering the
United States from the Eastern or Western Hemispheres, and further divided that cap by placing a limit of 20,000 immigrants per annum from any country. The majority of people immigrating to America from Europe at this time were members of the working class. Among them was my dad. The Immigration Act was designed to make the process of immigration to the United States more fair and less biased toward people of European descent, who seemed “less foreign.” The Immigration Act of 1965 effectively restructured the United States’ immigration policies in such a way that no group, minority or majority, was singled out by being discriminated against or given preferential treatment in terms of their ability to immigrate to America.

Example 4.4.4 When is it justifiable to believe? When is it right to trust in a conviction that could potentially change your life in some way? Is reliable proof necessary? Are there certain criteria that must be met before a thought can become a belief? Or is simply having a desire to believe any idea that pops into your mind, irrational or not, reasonable ground for believing? It is these questions that William James and W.K. Clifford individually seek the answers to. In an excerpt from his book The Will to Believe, James successfully disproves Clifford’s argument, explained in his article “The Ethics of Belief,” and reveals that under certain circumstances, it’s moral and rational to believe something without evidence.

4.5 Topic Sentences, Transitions, and Body Paragraphs

4.5.1 Topic Sentences (Compass)

If introductions are the road maps to your argument, topic sentences are the compass coordinates you are using to keep your argument on track with your thesis. For this reason, topic sentences are among the most important components of your paper. Not only do they link each paragraph to your thesis, but they keep your audience (and you) oriented to your argument. Topic sentences should typically be stated at the beginning of each new paragraph and should do two things: 1) introduce the main idea of that paragraph and 2) transition from the previous one. They don’t usually include specific details or pieces of evidence (that’s what the rest of the paragraph is for), but rather preface the claims you will be making. A helpful way to think about topic sentences is if you were to highlight your thesis, topic sentences, and conclusion, you would have a pretty solid outline of your argument (for more on reverse outlining, see Subsection 4.8.1).

There are a few different strategies for writing topic sentences. One way might be to include tentative topic sentences in your outline and start with those as you write the corresponding body paragraphs. Another strategy may be to write the body paragraph first, read it over to determine the main idea, and then write the corresponding topic sentence at the top.
Here are some example topic sentences from Puget Sound student papers:

- Scholars often hold up Athena and Penelope as portraits of independent and powerful women who were able to triumph over many men.
- Athena, too, is an example of sexism throughout the *Odyssey*.
- Before jumping to grandiose conclusions surrounding the role of women in ancient works, we must first take into consideration their actions and the ways in which they are described.
- As a result of the increasing majoritarian agitation within American politics, many states began to re-examine their constitutions in order to better incorporate the desires of the common majority. One issue addressed within this field of political reform was the concept of universal male suffrage.
- On the other side of the debate were men who wished to preserve property qualifications for voters.
- However, the dispute about universal male suffrage was taking place within a larger political discussion concerning the role of majoritarianism and minority rights within the government.
- The Immigration Act placed a cap on the number of immigrants entering the United States from the Eastern or Western hemispheres, and further divided that cap by placing a limit of 20,000 immigrants per annum from any country.
- The Immigration Act, and thus modern immigration regulations, allows for several classifications of immigrant.
- While my father’s immediate family remained together during its move to the United States, one of the greatest challenges for him proved to be the great distance that now separated him and his relatives and childhood friends, who still lived in Glasgow.
- Clifford is confident in his conviction that believing anything without proper evidence is immoral.
- Yet James has more than one convincing counterargument to Clifford’s claim.
4.5.2 Transitions (signposts)

Whether you are expressing a similar idea or introducing a completely new one, transitions can be useful when you want to move from one thought to another. Transitions act as the signposts for your paper, guiding the reader from one thought to another while minimizing unexpected surprises. Below are some examples of transitional expressions and how to use them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN/HOW TO USE IT</th>
<th>TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To add to a previous idea or to introduce a new idea</td>
<td>In addition, additionally, furthermore, similarly, along the same lines, in the same way, comparatively, along with, as previously mentioned, also, likewise, moreover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To elaborate</td>
<td>For example, for instance, specifically, in particular, to elucidate/elaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contradict a previous idea/show discrepancy</td>
<td>However, even though, although, while, even with, in spite of, despite, in contrast, on the other hand, but, contradictorily, nevertheless, nonetheless, meanwhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show cause and effect</td>
<td>Therefore, thus, hence, correspondingly, consequently, accordingly, in light of, because, it follows that, for this reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conclude a thought</td>
<td>All in all, overall, to conclude, in conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show sequence</td>
<td>First, before, in order to, initially, originally, to begin, precedingly, next, then, during, currently, concurrently, at the same time, simultaneously, meanwhile, after, finally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Body paragraphs are the different “landmarks” of your essay. These are the spaces where you can offer evidence for your claims, explain how and why specific details support your claims, and discuss the implications each claim has for the overall argument. Each body paragraph should contain (at least) these five things:

1. A transition from the previous paragraph
2. A topic sentence that states the main idea (can include the transition)
3. The evidence supporting that claim
4. Analysis of how the evidence supports the claim
5. A statement on how this contributes to the overall argument/thesis

If you need more than one body paragraph to make a point, don’t be afraid to take that space! You may need a few body paragraphs to give yourself enough space to fully explicate your evidence or support a single claim. However, if you find yourself needing to write pages and pages about one part of your argument, this may be an indication that you are trying to cover too much ground. When you go back and revise, you may want to consider either eliminating extraneous or unnecessary information or refocusing your thesis around the part of your argument you feel is the strongest or the most interesting to you.

If you find yourself writing paragraphs that are pages long, don’t worry—they can almost always be broken down into smaller paragraphs. Try identifying points in the paragraph that would be a logical place for a paragraph break. These include transitions shifting from one idea to another (“however,” “although,” “in contrast,” etc.), sudden changes in topic, and introductions to a new claim or a new piece of evidence. Enter a paragraph break at these points and see if the paragraphs work as two distinct entities within the larger body; keep in mind you may need to write a new topic sentence or two to preserve logic fluency.

If you find yourself writing paragraphs that are only a couple of sentences long, don’t stress. Shorter paragraphs are sometimes helpful for filling in the
gaps or acting as transitions between larger claims. However, a proliferation of shorter paragraphs may confuse and disorient the audience. Try outlining each of your paragraphs before you begin writing to help you flesh them out (see Section 3.6 and Section 4.3 for more tips on how to structure your paragraphs).

4.6 Conclusions

4.6.1 Role of the Conclusion (Album)

When it’s 1:59 a.m. in Collins Library and you’re nearing the end of your paper, it may be tempting for you to throw up your hands in desperation and exclaim, “I don’t need a conclusion! I’ve said everything I need to say!” While we’ve all been in that position, it’s definitely worth it to stay up a little later or get up a little earlier to write a strong conclusion. An effective conclusion:

- restates the argument to remind the audience where they have been, and
- offers some greater implications or applications of your proposed resolution.

Just as the introduction is the first thing your audience will read, the conclusion will be the last thing they remember before they put your paper down. In this way, the conclusion can be conceptualized as the photo scrapbook or Facebook album containing all the images from the reader’s journey, with a few new trip ideas or future destinations thrown in. For this reason, the conclusion can be a great opportunity for you to reach beyond the scope of the prompt and make connections to greater issues or concepts that were not discussed in your paper.

4.6.2 Anatomy of the Conclusion

Restating Your Thesis. When you reach your conclusion, it’s useful to remind the audience where they have been: What was the main argument of your paper and how did the evidence support it? However, don’t just restate your thesis as it appeared in your introduction; use different language and boil down your argument into main points to make it clear to the audience exactly what you expected them to learn from reading your paper. It may even be helpful to use sequential sentences to summarize your argument: “First, I showed you this. Then, I compared it to this. Finally, I used this knowledge to draw this conclusion.” Then, synthesize these points to show how they form a cohesive argument: “Based on these points, one may conclude ... [argument].”
Restating your thesis will consolidate your argument in the reader’s mind; this way, even if they didn’t read through the rest of your paper, they should be able to identify your primary argument based on your conclusion.

**Greater Implications.** Strong conclusions don’t merely restate your thesis statement but also offer some sense of the greater implications or applications of your argument. For instance, you could examine an influence your topic had on another issue, identify its historical significance, or pose practical applications or potential resolutions to your stated problem or question. The conclusion gives you space to briefly explore your topic beyond the prompt or scope of the paper, so use it! Be creative! Make a statement! When considering the greater implications of your argument, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- **So what?** Why is your argument important/significant? Why did you write about it in the first place?
- **What do you want the audience to take away from your paper?**
- **What implications does it have for current academic understanding?** Does it offer a different perspective on a topic or source?
- **How does your argument contribute to the greater scholarly conversation?** Does it support/refute the findings of other scholars in the field?
- **What other questions arise in light of your findings?**
- **What will be your paper’s legacy?** How do you want it to be used by future scholars writing about your same topic?

### 4.6.3 Strategies for Writing Effective Conclusions

Now that you know the basic parts of a conclusion, here are some tips and strategies to make yours as effective as it can be.

**Try articulating your entire argument in three to four sentences.** When crafting your conclusion, it can be tempting to rewrite as much as you can about your argument, because it’s all important, right? Where do you stop? How much is too much? You may even feel tempted to just copy and paste your topic sentences into the conclusion to avoid having to rearticulate your entire argument. Try to resist these temptations to be lazy. The purpose of the conclusion is to consolidate only the most important points of your paper to demonstrate how they fit together to form your overall argument. Your audience has already read your paper, so what are the points you want them to remember? To avoid simply rewriting your paper in the conclusion, try expressing your entire argument in three to four sentences, thinking only about the critical organs that keep your paper alive. Your conclusion should represent a sharper condensation of your argument.

**Restate your thesis ... without looking at your thesis.** Don’t just copy and paste your thesis from the introduction, hoping that your audience won’t notice. They will notice, because the introduction and conclusion fulfill very different functions, and you introduction should emphasize different parts of your argument than your conclusion does. Your argument likely will have evolved or grown somewhat over the course of writing your paper; while you
may have to revise your thesis to reflect this, the way you present your argument in your conclusion will likely be slightly different from how you wrote it in the introduction. To avoid simply restating your thesis using the same language, try writing your conclusion without looking at your thesis at all. As you should now be intimately acquainted with your topic (having just written several pages on it), doing so will likely enable you to restate your thesis to reflect a more evolved and sophisticated understanding of your argument.

**Play the “But, why?” game with a friend.** If you’ve ever spent time around young children, you are likely familiar with the “But, why?” game. It starts with an innocuous question like “Why is the sky blue?” You might answer, “Because of the way molecules scatter blue light from the sun.” But far from satisfying the inquisitive youth, your answer simply prompts another question: “But, why?” After a few rounds you likely give up and say, “Just because.” While it can be an irritating game to play with children, the “But, why?” game can actually be incredibly useful if you are having difficulty coming up with the greater implications or applications of your argument. Have your friend or a writing advisor read over the first part of your conclusion (the summary of your argument), and then have them drill you with “But, why?”s. Eventually, you will get to a point where you have to think about the greater significance or future implications of your paper in order to answer their questions (needless to say, answering a question with “Just because” is not allowed).

If you want some more ideas for writing effective conclusions, take a look at the following examples from Puget Sound student papers:

**Example 4.6.1** Athena’s relationships with Odysseus and Telemachus are clear examples of the strengthening of the gender divide, as it is these two men who win the day and the heart of Penelope. Athena stands out as the only venerable woman in the *Odyssey*, yet it is this very contrast that reminds us of the alleged lower standing of women.

Before jumping to grandiose conclusions surrounding the role of women in ancient works, we must first take into consideration their actions and the ways in which they are described. Their mere presence does not represent a victory for feminism, for it often means that they are being shown in a negative light. Only by reevaluating the discourse used in such works and determining whether it is empowering or problematic can we be objective in the way we view not only a specific work, but also an entire gender.
Example 4.6.2 John C. Calhoun effectively summarized the essential political theme of American politics in the early nineteenth-century when he wrote “When once formed, the community will be divided into two great parties—a major and minor—between which there will be incessant struggles on the one side to retain and on the other to obtain the majority, and thereby control of the government and the advantages it confers ...”. Political struggles between the evolving majority and the politically and economically established minority were carried out on the battlefield of universal male suffrage. The two debates are related through their specific answers to the question over which group should possess more political control. This relationship between the issues and the tension it highlights allow historians to better understand the relationship between politics and economics in this period of American history. More specifically, one can see how much economic issues of class, property, and wealth were linked to the political concerns of the American people. Understanding this relationship and its implications is invaluable for further examination of American society; it lays the basis for a more in-depth study on understanding America’s class structure and how its development was shaped, economically and politically, throughout the rest of the nineteenth-century.

Example 4.6.3 After interviewing my dad, I think it can be safely stated that his personal experience with immigration, as well as that of his family, was a pleasant one. His family suffered no great hardship in the process of moving from Glasgow, Scotland, to Greenville, South Carolina. Through the assistance of the Immigration Act, with its separate economic and family classifications, his family members were ensured that they would be able to immigrate together. Since the passage of this act in 1965, it has successfully worked to restructure the immigration policies of the United States so that no major or minor ethnic or national group is singled out. By not drawing special attention to any one group, chances for discrimination and preferential treatment are greatly reduced. This shows that the policies allowing for foreign immigration to the United States have been equalized, and have proven to be fairer than any policy set in place before 1965.

4.7 Research Process While Writing

The process of researching, writing, and revising is not linear. You don’t stop researching when you start writing, and you don’t stop researching or writing when you begin revising. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, it is best to think of your initial thesis as a working thesis. During your research,
writing, and revising process, your argument will (and should) change based on what you read and write. You may end up writing a completely different paper than you had originally envisioned, or your final thesis may simply be a revised and refined version of your working thesis. Regardless, as you write your first draft, it is important that you don’t stop doing research. How, then, does your research process evolve with your writing?

Research is initially very broad. You’re trying to figure out what scholarship on your topic exists and where you might contribute to the scholarly conversation regarding that topic. As you work toward a thesis, that research will become increasingly specific because you have a better idea of what kind of sources and evidence you need and what kind of background your reader will need to make sense of your argument. Figuring out when to write, when to research, and when to revise can be difficult, so below are some tips and tricks to help you determine what to do and when to do it.

First, after you do your initial research, WRITE! Don’t let the guise of “needing to do more research” let you procrastinate on writing for too long. Because time, accessibility, and resources limit the type and amount of research you can do, you will never have enough research (but that’s okay!). You should start writing when you feel like you have a solid understanding of necessary background information and a good outline of your argument. (Of course, you can always write before this point in the process, too.) Even if what you’re writing is incoherent and doesn’t end up in the final draft, the process of getting your thoughts onto paper will help you sort out your ideas.

You’ll probably know that you need to do more research when you:

- find yourself stuck.
- want to say something but don’t have the evidence to back it up.

Sidenote. Don’t make a claim without the evidence to back it up.

- look through your evidence and realize that some (or all) of the sources no longer pertain to your topic or argument.
- have an “ah-ha!” moment that leads you to change direction such that your sources are no longer relevant.
- run out of sources and need to find more.
- have nothing else to say and realize that you need to expand your research question and argument.
- are repeatedly citing the same source (unless that source is what your paper is about!).

Review. if you’re stuck and not sure whether or not it’s because you need to do more research.

Don’t worry if you don’t use all of your research. If reading this list is making you sad and overwhelmed (“But I already have so much research! I’ve already done so much work! I’m already so overwhelmed!”), worry not. A lot of the initial research you do doesn’t end up being part of your final product, but that’s okay! Doing a lot of research helps familiarize you with the field and points your research in the right direction. Conducting research while you’re writing only means that you’re a step (or a few steps!) closer to a final draft. While researching and writing, you may realize that you need information you hadn’t anticipated or even known existed prior to researching.
Compartmentalize. Research can yield a lot of information (and books and browser tabs and open PDFs) in a short amount of time. Drowning in sources while mid draft can become stressful, so try focusing on one section of your paper, research, or argument development. You might also try finding an alternative way to save sources so you’re not bombarded with articles every time you open your computer (see Use technology below).

That’s some n-ICE research you’re doing!

Tricks.

Check bibliographies! If you find yourself repeatedly using a specific article, try looking up the sources that the author lists in the article’s bibliography—you’ll probably find even more sources that are also useful!

Make an annotated bibliography Sometimes professors assign annotated bibliographies to encourage students to begin researching and thinking about the research process. If you are assigned one, then take it seriously and do as much work as possible on it. By the time you’re ready to start writing your paper, you’ll already have most of your sources compiled, most of your citations done, and most of your background information gathered. While an annotated bibliography may seem like an unnecessary hassle, you will thank yourself later! If you aren’t assigned one, though, you can create an informal version for yourself. Simply gather your useful articles and summarize the argument of each in your own words. You might also add a sentence or two about how you plan to use the article as evidence for your argument. If you’re feeling really productive (or if you want to procrastinate productively), you could also write the citations for
each article to go along with your annotations (don’t leave this for the last second!).

**Leave notes to yourself while you’re writing** So you have done some research, started figuring out your ideas, and finally gotten into a groove when, all of a sudden, you stumble across something that you need to research more. But the thing is, you don’t want to stop writing because you might lose your groove! What do you do? Fear not! You can always leave a note to yourself (like this! “Research more about penguins.” You might even highlight the note OR PUT IT IN ALL CAPS to remind yourself to go back and address it!), and continue your sentence as if you’ve already done the research. Especially since you can always go back and revise your sentence based on the new evidence you find, if you’re mid thought and don’t want to interrupt yourself, then don’t!

**Color-code** If you like to color-code, you might try using different-colored sticky notes, pens, or highlighters to track your research in different ways. One color might, for example, indicate background information, another might be for quotes you want to use, and yet another could mark research you do while you’re writing. This coding system is especially useful for doing research in books because you can lose a quote so easily! (But remember: NEVER write in books from Collins Library! Save your sticky notes for those.)

**Use technology** Since most articles are quite long and you probably won’t use every page from every article, save your PrintGreen for printing out your class readings and look into online PDF-readers like Adobe Acrobat, Foxit Reader, or ReadCube for articles you collect independently. Tools like these enable you to store, organize, highlight, and annotate a large number of articles without a single trip to the printer. Online research tools make it especially easy for you to add new research as you write because you can add completely new folders, move or delete articles that are no longer useful, or note differences between your new and old articles.

---

4.8 Revising

When we revise, we deal with both Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs). HOCs include things such as the thesis, organization, topic sentences, and the use of evidence. LOCs include things like grammar
and syntax. At the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLT), we focus largely on HOCs.

THINGS THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU

As you’re revising, pay attention to these HOCs:

**Thesis** Is it argumentative? Does it indicate the sequence of your essay? Is it specific?

For instance, a statement such as “I dislike broccoli” does none of these things. But a statement more along the lines of “By recording and examining the verbal and non verbal reactions of college students to eating broccoli, I argue that broccoli provokes feelings of disgust from the majority of college students” encapsulates the argument, mentions the evidence to be examined, and hints at the progression of the essay.

**Topic Sentences** Do they articulate the main point of your paragraph?

Topic sentences should indicate the main point of the paragraphs that they head. For instance, a topic sentence such as “Scientists claim that broccoli is a good source of protein and Vitamin E” tells the reader that this paragraph will discuss some of the nutritional benefits of broccoli.

**Transitions** Do they signal the direction that the paragraphs take?

Transitional words such as “whereas,” “however,” “in addition,” and “although” can be helpful to elucidate the relation between the paragraph and the previous one (see Subsection 4.5.2).

For instance, a transitioned topic sentence such as “While dieticians expound the nutritional value of broccoli, college students insist on its inedibility” signals a shift from a paragraph on the nutritional benefit of broccoli to one recording college students’ disgust at broccoli.

**Evidence** In general, do you perform some type of (textual) analysis?

For instance, if one student said, “When I eat broccoli, my soul shrinks and my hands shake and my insides cleave to the sides of my stomach to avoid the broccoli as it plummets down my digestive tract,” I might analyze her statement by saying, “The student’s hyperbolic and anaphoric description of her reaction to ingesting broccoli, indicated by her literalizing of otherwise figural images, reveals the intensity of her reaction toward broccoli.”

**Concluding Sentence** Is the reader left with a sense of the paragraph’s relevance to the thesis?

Include a statement linking the point made in the paragraph to the thesis. Where does it fit in the architecture of the paper?

For instance: “The qualitative strength of students’ verbal reactions to eating broccoli suggests their strong aversion to the vegetable.”
Conclusion  Does it encapsulate the argument of the paper in a new way? Is there a sense of broader significance or application?  

For instance, the conclusion  

“Recorded student reactions to eating broccoli indicate that broccoli is an unpopular food choice among college students. These findings suggest that broccoli should be excised from the SUB menu.”  

suggests the practical removal of broccoli from the SUB menu.

REVISION checklist

☐ THESIS:  Is it argumentative? Does it gesture at the sequence of your essay? Is it specific?

☐ TOPIC SENTENCE:  Does it articulate the main point of the paragraph?

☐ TRANSITION:  Does it signal the direction that the paragraph takes in your essay?

☐ EVIDENCE:  In general, do you perform some type of (textual) analysis?

☐ CONCLUDING SENTENCE:  Is the reader left with a sense of the paragraph’s relevance to the thesis?

☐ CONCLUSION:  Does it encapsulate the argument of the paper in a new way? Is there a sense of broader significance?

Figure 4.8.1: Revision Checklist

4.8.1 Reverse Outlining

Have you ever gone to Abercrombie & Fitch? Of course not. Well, a generic clothing store, then, where a certain T-shirt caught your eye. You held it against yourself and looked in the mirror, noting that it would look good on you but otherwise uncertain if it fit. The next thing you would do, of course, is try it on, for only after you've tried it on will you know if it fits.

A reverse outline is like looking in a mirror after you’ve tried on the T-shirt inasmuch as it is an outline constructed after a draft has been produced. We all know that it can be difficult to visualize the organization of a paper before the evidence has been integrated and analyzed. By outlining the paper after the fact, the writer can consider the shape that the paper takes when dressed with a significant amount of content. It’s easy to do: just put the paper aside and, using whatever method you’re comfortable with (see Section 4.3), outline what you remember of the structure of your paper. By reverse outlining, you should be able to better visualize how you’ve actually organized your paper and, as is often the case, think of alternative organizations.
4.8.2 Peer Review

Few are more familiar with peer review than writing advisors. It’s a lot of what we do! And it’s likely that in some of your classes, your professor will also hold a peer review session at some point. That said, there are some keys to mastering the art of peer review.

Be friendly There’s nothing more off-putting to a writer than a reviewer who either implicitly or explicitly shames that peer’s writing. Start with positives and read for potential. Remember: as a peer reviewer, you should be offering polite and constructive criticism, not trying to prove that you’re a better writer than your peer.

Be affirmative Let your peer know that the work they are doing is never wasted. Affirm the good things that a paper does (there are always good things). The writer needs to know what to keep in the paper or what to continue doing.

Be critical Even though you should be friendly, you aren’t doing your peer any favors when you notice something but don’t point it out. Contrary to common belief, it is possible to be both friendly and critical.

Be efficient Don’t mark every typo or instance of non standard language usage. Look for patterns and identify one or two instances of these patterns. Focus on Higher Order Concerns relating to argument, organization, and the ideas expressed in the paper. The Revision Checklist provides a way to home in on some of the more systemic aspects of a paper. Save your ink for more important things, like writing checks to the University of Puget Sound Alumni Fund.

Be open Having your writing read—whether by a peer, or a professor, or an employer—will always entail some degree of vulnerability. Trust that your reviewer is not out to hurt you or your feelings. Remind yourself that the best revision comes about as a result of communication between parties mutually interested and invested in the success of the paper. Friends often find things that we cannot, especially those issues we have learned to overlook after reading our paper over and over again.

Be present Get coffee with your peer reviewer. Comments are often easier to stomach in person and when you can hear your peer’s voice. And if you’re reviewing remotely and won’t be able to have a discussion, be especially intentional about the language and tone that you adopt. Not everyone knows that that comment you made regarding the writer’s perfectly fine use of alternating pronouns was sarcastic.

4.9 Overcoming Obstacles

Over the course of your writing process, you will inevitably run into roadblocks, get stuck, or have moments of panic. These obstacles and feelings are completely normal. Even the most accomplished professional and academic writers experience writer’s block, anxiety, and frustration. The key to overcoming these paralyzing feelings is to develop strategies to use when they arise. As you practice these strategies, you will become better at knowing which strategy to use in order to overcome an obstacle most pleasantly and efficiently.
What to do when you get stuck.

**Identify the source of the problem**  Are you simply tired and need a break? Sometimes your brain needs a break, and that is okay. Take one!

**Is there something you don’t understand?**  If so, can you figure out specifically what you need help with? If you can identify what you’re hung up on, then your questions and research will be much more useful and efficient.

**Is your organization not working anymore?**  Sometimes writers become stuck when the outline they had planned is no longer logical. Take a step back, reorganize, and try again.

**Do you need to do more research?**  If you’re saying to yourself, “I really need to say something, but I can’t because I don’t have evidence,” then do more research. If you don’t have anything else to say, do more research! Reading more about your topic will likely spark new ideas or lines of argument.

**Are you anxious or frustrated?**  Keep reading …

---

**Managing Anxiety.**

**Know that you will be okay**  You will survive writing this paper. Although grades, improvement, and learning are important, your worth as a human being and as a student does not revolve around one college assignment.

**You are not alone**  You go to a great school with great resources for students. Try going to your professor’s office hours, making an appointment at the CWLT, or visiting a liaison librarian. If you’re really feeling overwhelmed, remember that Counseling, Health, and Wellness Services (CHWS) offers free counseling appointments.

**Remember what interests you about your topic**  Whether your paper is due for your favorite or least favorite class, you can always find a way to invest yourself in your topic. Focusing on the interesting parts of the topic itself may help you focus less on the stress of writing a paper and more on the intellectual conversation in which you, a scholar in training, are participating.

**Try taking a break**  Breathe for a few minutes. Go for a walk, do some yoga, call someone, or watch a funny video on YouTube.
Managing Frustration.

**Writing is frustrating** Words don’t always come out in the way you hope they do, and sometimes you just don’t know what to say. Acknowledging that you’re frustrated may be enough to reorient yourself in order to try again.

**Go back or skip ahead to work on a different section** Sometimes all frustration needs is time. Try working on something else in the meantime.

**Re-read your sources** Going back through your data, evidence, or primary texts may encourage you or remind you of something to say that you’ve forgotten about.

**Take a step back** If you’re too frustrated to continue, do something else entirely and try again later.

Managing Time.

**Good time management helps prevent frustration** Since one of the greatest sources of stress during the writing process is being pressed for time, try to manage your time wisely by planning your time well in advance (and, if you have to procrastinate, try using the tips in ).

**Create a schedule** Figure out how much time you have until your assignment is due, and plan accordingly. How much time will you need to do the initial research or data collection? Even if you’re short on time, make sure to save time for planning—it will save you time in the long run! Aim to have time to complete a rough draft, to revise, and to polish a final draft. Planning ahead also enables you to schedule an appointment at the CWLT or Collins Library early enough to get an appointment time that works best for you.

**Start early** If planning a timeline is too structured for your personal writing process, you should at least plan to start early!

**Make an appointment** Make an appointment with an acade-
mic consultant at the CWLT to practice scheduling and time management.

**What do you do if you’ve put the paper off too long and are now pressed for time?** Don’t put it off any longer. Start! You might be frustrated with yourself, but don’t let that frustration derail the time that you do have left. Procrastination happens to everyone, so it’s best to forgive yourself, to move on, and to remember that frustration next time you think about procrastinating. Now, take a deep breath and figure out where you are in the writing process. If you haven’t yet started ...

**Research** Do your research. Unfortunately, you may not have as much time as you would like to investigate everything you had hoped to. You have to be as efficient as possible, so don’t dilly-dally while you’re looking for sources. Use the research terms suggested in Chapter 1 to search more effectively. Read the title of an article and, if it looks promising, click on the link. Read the abstract. If the paper still looks useful to you, download the full article. Skim the introduction and conclusion. Scroll through the article and read section headings. If any part in particular might contribute to your research, skim that section (see Subsection 2.1.3). Look for arguments the author is making or any relevant data you might be able to use. When you find something you think you’ll need for your paper, stop skimming and read carefully. Make a note of whatever you have found, and make sure that you label or code the note so you know which source it’s from. Save the source in whatever way you save sources to keep track of them. Don’t let researching become another way for you to procrastinate. When you have a sufficient amount of information, move on. You can (and should) always research more later.

**Planning** Get out a piece of paper or a whiteboard and plan. Hopefully you will have previously played around with/practiced different types of outlines so you know which to use (for outlining ideas, see Section 4.3). Even if you haven’t, choose a planning and an outline format that you think will enable you to organize your ideas most logically and effectively. Before you begin an outline, try writing down all the ideas you have and connecting them in a way you see fit. Let those connections guide your outline. For your outline, focus on the components of your argument: your main claim, supporting claims, and evidence. Use the six-step process outlined in Section 3.4 to develop a solid working thesis. Identify an order for the body paragraphs of your paper, and then determine where your evidence will go and how you’re going to use it. Be sure not to get too caught up on planning. You might need to revise your plan as you write, so the plan doesn’t have to be perfect. It just needs to give
you a solid idea of what your paper is going to look like.

**Writing** Start writing as soon as possible, but make sure that you’re going into your draft with background research and a plan in mind. Some people write well under pressure, while others feel too stressed or stifled to begin writing. Identify which type of writer you are, and then relax and act accordingly. If writing under pressure works for you, then go for it. Just be sure to leave time for revision. If writing under pressure makes you freeze up, then relax! Remember why you chose your topic, what excites you about your research, or what compelling points you plan to make in your essay. Writing last minute is not ideal, but you can still write an amazing paper and develop important ideas in a short amount of time. Yes, your paper most likely would have been better if you had started earlier (remember that for next time!), but you can only move forward now. So take a breath and start writing! You have your research and your plan, and now you only need to put the ideas together. Good luck; you can do it!

**Revising** Unless your paper is due in five minutes and you’re still writing, it’s best to save a little time for revision. Even in that case, consider finishing up what you’re writing and try revising for a minute or two—a solid, logical argument and the absence of small, accidental errors might benefit you more in the long run than a little extra length. However, when you have more time, save as much as possible for revision. Ideally you’ll be able to take a short break to clear your mind before you begin revising, so aim to block off at least 15–20 minutes. As long as you have a complete draft, the more time you save for revision, the better. Taking a break and stepping away from your paper, which you’ll likely have been staring at for a while, will help you have a better perspective when you return to revise. Take a walk, look out the window, do some stretches, talk to a friend, or grab a snack. When you return, take a breath and read through your paper. Focus primarily on your *thesis* (Does it make sense? Does it reflect what you ended up arguing throughout your paper?), your *topic sentences* (Do they tell the reader what each paragraph is about and how each point connects to your main argument? Are they clear?), and your *introduction* and *conclusion* (Does your introduction begin without clichés? Do you introduce the topic concisely but effectively? Does your conclusion summarize your argument without simply repeating what you’ve said? Do you raise questions about significance and further research? What do you leave the reader with?). If you have more time, visit the Revision Checklist. If you have even more time than you thought you would, you can also look for places where elaboration or explanation is needed, where your evidence is weak, where you could reorganize, or where sentences need to be revised or rewritten.
Think about next time You might have survived this paper, and maybe you even end up getting a great grade, but *don’t make a habit out of starting your papers late*. It’s amazing how much more you can learn and how much better you can get at writing when you have the time to reflect on what you’ve written, to revise thoroughly, and to talk to others about your ideas.

Some tips to fight off procrastination:

**Figure out why you want to procrastinate** Are you afraid? Uninterested in your topic? Do you not know where to start? Or do you just really want to catch up on your favorite TV show? (For ideas about how to address these problems, see List ??)

**Tell yourself that you’ll work for five minutes** That’s it. It may sound crazy, but this is actually a really good way to lie to—I mean, to “encourage”—yourself in order to get work done. Once you’ve begun working, your anxiety about starting (or your desire to Internet surf to avoid working) will hopefully diminish, and you will likely find yourself able to work for much longer than five minutes.

**Create your ideal work environment** You’re finally away from home, you have your own (… shared) space, and you’ve instituted a moratorium on any type of cleaning or organizing. Although you might be living the cleaning-free dream (perhaps to the dismay of your roommate), consider throwing away some of those granola bar wrappers and taking your sub dishes back to the sub (seriously, take them back to the sub). Having a clean working space might help you focus. If not, try studying in different places around campus until you find a space that you can work in. Depending on your noise-level and spatial preferences and the time of day (or night), you might try Diversions, the piano lounge, the rotunda, upstairs in the sub, a study room in the basement or second floor of the library, empty classrooms in Thompson, study areas in Thompson/Harned, Oppenheimer (the cafe), the cwlt, common spaces in your residence hall, study spaces around Wyatt or Weyerhaeuser, or (if the weather is nice) even somewhere outside (hint: the courtyard outside Oppenheimer Cafe has outdoor outlets!). Your study preferences might be different for each of your classes, so experiment!

**List your tasks, and break them down into parts** While pretending your work doesn’t exist may seem like the ideal solution, we assure you that it is not. You can lay all of your books, folders, or syllabi on the ground or your bed and organize them by priority or amount of work. Alternatively, you can make a list with all of your classes and write out the week’s assignments for each class. Once you’ve faced the
harsh reality of all the work you have to do, take a breath! Now, split up each task into manageable parts. Have 100 pages of reading? Can you split it up into groups of 20 or 25? Have six math problems? Do them in sets of two or three. Have a ten-page paper to write? Try writing two pages a day. By splitting something into its components, you’ll likely feel less overwhelmed and therefore less desperate to procrastinate.

Limit distractions This tip is probably the worst one. It can be really hard! But know that some time away from the non-research-related Internet (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Netflix, Buzzfeed … ) isn’t a bad thing. In fact, it might make rewarding yourself (after a chunk of study time, of course) with some Internet time even more satisfying. To reduce temptations, you can try various strategies:

• Look up browser plug-ins or apps that restrict access to certain websites for periods of time.
• See if your phone needs an update (it’s hard to text when it’s taking five minutes to restart!).
• Put your phone on a “do not disturb” setting, or ask your friends not to bother you for a while; turn off notifications.
• Go in a public place where you’d be embarrassed to be seen procrastinating for two hours.
• Ask a friend to study with you, and keep each other accountable.
• Make a schedule that requires you to work but rewards you with a break (for example, you might work diligently for fifty minutes and then reward yourself with a ten-minute YouTube video or ten minutes of a show on Netflix each hour—just beware that you don’t get too distracted during your breaks).

If you need to, try treating yourself like a small child You can try encouragements like, “I know you don’t want to finish your essay, but you need to. Once you’re done, you can go to The Cellar for some ice cream!” Alternatively, you can create consequences for yourself if you keep procrastinating on your task: “Well, [your name here], since you just spent ten minutes working and fifty minutes watching Netflix, you have to wait until tomorrow to watch the new Game of Thrones episode.”

Remind yourself of what you’re excited about Sometimes we get so caught up in the tediousness of the work we have to do that we forget why we’re here. Even if you’re procrastinating on work for a class you don’t enjoy, try to think about the bigger picture—completing your assignment means that you’re one step closer to fulfilling a requirement and moving on to classes you’re more interested in. But hey, the assignment might also surprise you, and you might end up learning something that you find fascinating. You never know!
Forgive yourself Procrastination happens! Forgive yourself and move on. Don’t let the fact that you’ve been procrastinating all day keep you from starting on your work.

Decrease the amount of work you have to begin with You’d be surprised at how much you can get done during the little chunks of time you have throughout the day, be it five minutes before class, an awkward hour in between classes, or extra time in the morning or before bed. Even if you can only read a couple of pages, write a paragraph, or finish a math problem during a small break, that’s still less work you’ll have to do later. Plan ahead and bring along any materials you might need to be as productive as possible.
Chapter 5

Discipline-Specific Writing

In the previous chapters, we have discussed general traits of all (or most?) academic writing and all academic writing processes. But, as you will no doubt notice, there are some significant differences between writing in different disciplines. It may sometimes seem like faculty members just want you to keep changing your writing to fit their individual preferences. While we all have our own preferences, faculty members also are trained specialists within their own disciplinary backgrounds, and part of their job is to teach you about those disciplinary backgrounds—including the writing conventions of those disciplines.

To help you navigate the discipline-specific writing conventions you encounter in your courses, we have consulted with faculty in departments at Puget Sound. Based on our conversations with them, we have compiled the following guidelines. Try using these guidelines when you write your next paper; you may find that that seemingly quirky assignment makes more sense than you initially thought!

Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes come from faculty members in the department interviews that inform the advice given here.

5.1 Writing for African American Studies

African American Studies is a discipline that you probably didn’t encounter in high school, and hopefully you’re excited about how much you have to learn. Read this guide to understand the basics of writing in AFAM!

Purpose. “Without writing it’s hard for students to even learn and process what they’re getting from AFAM, because it’s so much, but if you start to write it, you can really start to gather your thoughts—what you do know, what you don’t know, rather than just being able to shake your head agree, or even give a couple comments randomly in class. When you’re trying to put it on paper you see the fact that, most likely it’s a lot bigger than you thought.”

Distinct from other disciplines, AFAM is a deeply introspective, interdisciplinary, civically engaged and explicitly ethical field. Accordingly, the purpose of AFAM is to shape and strengthen your ethical convictions through informed research and writing. Thus, writing in AFAM is a practice that intentionally gives you a space to reflect more deeply on the bigger pictures of the discipline—to see what you didn’t see before, to see your mind out loud. Therefore, even as AFAM shapes you into a better writer, it can also reveal to you how you’ve
been taught to think by society and other disciplines, and encourage you to reflect on those teachings. This introspective quality of AFAM makes it uniquely interdisciplinary, allowing it to take on the absences, the unaddressed issues and unanswered questions of other disciplines. Lastly, AFAM will also push you outside yourself and into the experiences of others and into the civic sphere that the discipline itself is engaged in.

Traits and Characteristics. “You have to ask ‘where should have been in history?’ Because people of color are missing, that’s why we cover all the disciplines, to ask ‘where are we?’ So, really, every discipline is a part of Black Studies.”

At the heart of AFAM is an interdisciplinary formation. At its beginnings AFAM took on the absences of all the other disciplines, the places in them where should people of color have been. Accordingly, AFAM asks you to write conscious of the other disciplines you’re writing in, not by being obedient to those disciplines, but by being aware that all disciplines have particular modes and methods of thinking and that they understand evidence differently—in a way that isn’t necessarily objective. For instance, if you’re citing an anthropologist on a particular topic, part of your analysis needs to include context like “What does an anthropologist tend to see and not see?” and “What is it that the field says?”

Another of AFAM’s values is the importance of understanding both sides of an argument and where both sides are coming from. It’s an ethic of respect and regard to ask, before you get to “I disagree” and “I’m arguing this,” whether you know what the actual argument you’re opposing is. This ethic of respect also extends backwards within the field itself: ideas have a long trajectory, and we tend to quote only the recent works. For example, we tend to give the prison industrial complex and the new Jim Crow conversations to Michelle Alexander, and that affects the erasure of Angela Davis. So when you’re building an argument, you have to ask where the idea came from, because that’s part of the battle against erasure. Further, this battle is an intersectional one, within the field, across gender, sexuality and class. Even within Black Studies there are ways in which certain writings get privileged and others don’t, so the writing in this field strives not to practice the same erasure that other fields have practiced.

A third characteristic of writing in AFAM is its civic engagement. Scholarship in AFAM is meant to reach out beyond practitioners of the field to people who aren’t necessarily trained in sociology or history: if someone were to pick up your paper anywhere, they should be able to know what it’s about quickly and efficiently. Although your professor likely already knows or has explained in class the definitions and the context of what you’re writing about, at the end of the day, a lot of people don’t know, and that’s who you’re writing to. Consequently, you have to make sure there’s a foundation within your own writing that sets up for what you’re sharing. You always have that platform you kick off of.

Evidence. “The idea that knowledge can come from outside of the academy is really central to Black Feminist thought.”

Unlike in many other disciplines, the lived experience and identity of the author are very important in AFAM. It would be difficult, in this field, to dismiss the personal because AFAM doesn’t exist without questioning knowledge production, without noting that knowledge is not objective and that Eurocentric disciplinary knowledge comes out of a particular time and place. So acknowledgement of personal perspectives or identity or position is a part of
how this field understands knowledge constructions. Indeed, AFAM literally began with personal experience, with slave narratives. Some of our first historical information about Black folks is from those stories, and it’s in them that we first start to get a glimpse of what society was like for African Americans and other marginalized groups. Those narratives, written from an African American perspective, are the only way that some original truth or experience can be found. Even if you’re not African American or Black and you’re in this field, you still can’t erase the personal because that identity situates you.

You do have to be careful with personal experience, though. Any evidence you bring forward must be part of a larger conversation, not something that only relates to you.

Conventions and Tips. “It’s not about political correctness or censorship. It’s care. Historically situated care. It’s not that you didn’t use the politically correct thing, it’s that you didn’t use the contextually careful thing, the ethically careful thing. The only way to write ethically is to practice.”

- Language is important. Be very specific about the language you use throughout your writing; here are a couple of specific guidelines:
  - Capitalize “African American Studies,” and it’s singular not plural.
  - Use current, appropriate language in your writing. Language used in the past to identify people of color is usually not appropriate in the current context unless you are citing a quote. (see Ch. 6 Writing with Awareness for more help on this, and if you’re still not sure, ask your professor).

- Understand and convey the situatedness of whatever you write about. For instance, if you’re writing about DuBois, you’ve got to explain why DuBois was arguing the way he was (in opposition to Booker T. Washington).

- Integrating language and quotes from Non-SAE speakers is encouraged. Use your writing as a space to include different voices. For instance, in an upper level AFAM class you might write a scientific counseling article about drug addiction but you could have direct excerpts about people’s experiences with drug addiction as African Americans related to whatever section you’re talking about because that adds to it.

- Define your terms! You can’t assume that everybody knows what you mean. Also sometimes there are many words for the same definition. You need to explain that when you say “Black,” you mean this vs. when you say “African American” you mean that.

- Don’t rely on jargon! Your writing should be a way you can express what you’re learning in class to the public. Jargon can get in the way.

- Come to class and do the reading so that you’re prepared to write respectfully.

External Resources. “Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women’s Studies” and “Research Methods in Africana Studies” McDougal will give you an idea of the different registers that form AFAM scholarship.
5.2 Writing for Art and Art History

Writing about art can be challenging because, before embarking on a discussion or analysis of a work, you first have to translate your experience of a visual image or a structure into language. This is true not only for Art History students whose papers are often based on the visual analysis of images or monuments, but also for Studio Art students who write artist statements in which they verbally articulate ideas and influences that they have expressed visually in their work.

Genres. The most frequent types of papers students write in Art History courses include visual analysis papers, research papers, critical analyses of scholarly articles, and exhibition reviews. While research papers and critical analyses of scholarly articles are similar to such papers in other disciplines (e.g., History or English), they likely include a visual analysis component that is not typical in other disciplines. Visual analysis papers and exhibition reviews are genres unique to Art History and Art Criticism, and they both build on the close reading of a single object/monument or a close reading of a series objects and the space in which they are displayed. Studio Art students frequently write exhibition reviews or responses, analyses of the work of an influential artist, and artist statements.

Purpose. The purpose of writing in Art and Art History courses is to derive meaning from visual works from the past and present, to become more skilled in visual literacy, and to develop and amplify skills of analysis and argumentation, and independent thinking. Art and Art History papers will also develop your self-expression and facilitate your immersion in the creative field of Art or the scholarly field of Art History based upon sound research skills and careful, solid arguments. Studio Art courses will prompt you to reflect carefully on your own artistic processes and ways of thinking and to articulate your relationship to the tradition of art-making.

Valued Characteristics. A unique characteristic of writing in Art History is its reliance on visual analysis. The ultimate goal of writing a visual analysis is to understand how the work you’re writing about conveyed and conveys meaning. A convincing visual analysis is an interpretation of the work that combines the examination of formal, experiential details in light of relevant contextual information, therefore close reading of visual information and the critical analysis of primary and secondary sources are valued characteristics of art historical writing.

For visual analysis papers and exhibition reviews, the first step is translating your experience of what you see and what you feel or perceive with your senses into words; for example, when you stand in front of Michelangelo’s David at the Gallery of the Academy in Florence, you not only look at the composition and carefully crafted details of the sculpture, you also react to its size, its placement on a high pedestal, your opportunity to walk around the figure, and the space where it is displayed and other visitors’ reactions to it. When you are not able to visit the work in person, you should still try to imagine how it operates in its physical context, taking into account whether it is currently found in its original location. Once you have performed this first, observational step, the second step in visual analysis is to contextualize the artwork you’re writing about in its historical moment. One way to contextualize an artwork is to compare it to works of art that have a similar subject matter, share its
time period, or both. This kind of comparison will help you and your reader understand how the work fits into larger artistic developments. Another way to contextualize an artwork is to understand its social, religious, or cultural role by using primary textual sources (e.g., diaries of artists or patrons involved, documents of the work’s commissioning, preparatory sketches or studies of the artist, newspaper articles that reveal how the work was received when it was first displayed, and historical accounts that describe the work). A third way to contextualize an artwork is to understand how it was originally displayed. A final contextualization strategy is to use the work of scholars who have studied the same monument or related monument to build on or refute.

A common genre in Studio Art is an artist statement. The valued characteristics in an artist statement differ somewhat from those in a visual analysis. An artist statement is a short essay, about one page in length that is written in the first person. The purpose of artist statements is to articulate the processes, influences, and concepts that inform your independent artistic practices. These statements verbalize the multi-faceted ideas that inform artists’ work, providing helpful context for viewers, curators, selection panels, and peers. A compelling artist statement communicates significant elements about the motives and concerns that inspire works of art. It can address a number of meaningful issues and influences such as your sense of identity, intellectual or technical aspects of your artistic process, and your position in relation to the history of your medium. An artist statement is subjective in the sense that it reflects personal creative processes, yet it should also reflect and even interrogate broader cultural, social, political, and/or scientific themes.

Evidence. For Art History papers, your evidence will be drawn from three types of sources: the visual evidence provided by the work of art that you are analyzing; primary textual sources that date to the same period as your visual evidence; and scholarly secondary sources. Secondary scholarly sources can provide you with a framework for analysis, or can provide factual information about primary sources that the author used but you may not have easy access to. Secondary sources can also offer an interpretation of the work you are analyzing which you may accept or reject based on your own critical analysis of the work, primary sources, and the scholarly literature. You will need to document the sources of your ideas and information vigorously throughout your paper in order to show what sources you have used for your work; art historians typically use footnotes or endnotes for such purpose.

Papers that you will write in Studio Art courses will focus primarily on visual evidence, although occasionally primary sources of artists’ writings or secondary scholarly sources will also be used.

Conventions and Tips.

Be selective When you are writing a visual analysis, keep in mind that you will not be able to describe every detail of the work, so you will need to select the most dominant features that convey the meaning of the work. In organizing a visual analysis, always provide a brief description of the work as a whole before examining specific details of it more fully.

Be descriptive and analytical When you describe visual features of an artwork in your visual analysis, explain why those aspects of the work contribute to the overall meaning con-
veyed by the work. Describing a visual feature of an artwork is similar to using quotes in other disciplines, such as History or English. Just as you do not throw a quote from a primary or secondary source into your text without explaining its importance, do not let the visual evidence speak for itself, since a different viewer might draw different conclusions than what you are getting at.

Use Chicago Style to format your references in Art History papers.

Additional Resources. Read the sections on Writing for History and Writing for English of this handbook to gain more understanding about close reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Consult Sylvan Barnet’s A Short Guide to Writing About Art, Pearson, 2014 for more detail about writing about art (including medium specific questions one may ask when analyzing a work), for tips and examples of effective visual analyses, and for advice on completing research papers.

5.3 Writing for Biology

Some students initially believe that writing is not important to science; however, lab reports are actually vital to understanding the context and the relevance of the science you are doing in lab and learning about in class, and their format allows scientists to communicate findings concisely and succinctly. After learning the specific skills that are needed, many students learn that they particularly enjoy writing for the natural sciences. Read this guide to learn about how writing for biology can be helpful and meaningful to you!

Genres. As in most science classes, the vast majority of the writing you do will be in the form of lab reports. Lab reports are papers based on an investigation that follows the standard template of an introduction, a methods section, a presentation of results, and a discussion of those results. In most biology classes you will be asked to write both full-length lab reports as well as individual sections of one for practice. Other kinds of writing that you may be asked to do include abstracts, critical reviews (in which you synthesize the primary literature on a topic) or, in upper-division classes, research proposals, and research papers.

Purpose. “We spend so much time in lab on the methods portion and results portion, but lab reports are really helpful because they make us put our results in the greater context.”

It’s entirely too easy to become myopic in lab (both figuratively and literally—goggles don’t help anyone’s eyesight). Because of this possibility, lab reports become not only effective ways to communicate the results of an experiment to other scientists, but also good places to help you understand the science you have done more fully and in the context of biology as a discipline. Further, while the prescribed format may seem constraining, there is a reason why it has lasted: it can help you organize your own thoughts and give you the space to “step back” and find the larger frame for your experiment. In this way, lab reports are actually great opportunities to rethink what you’ve done in lab
and learned in class on your own and to understand the larger import of the experiment you conducted.

Traits and Characteristics. “I like to think of science almost like a coral reef you can build on: you build on what’s beneath.”

The purpose of doing an experiment is never just to have done the experiment; rather, as the quote marking this subsection indicates, the purpose of a lab is not to repeat something already known but to build innovatively on what you’ve learned, allowing you to explore the emergent properties of scientific knowledge. This idea is particularly important to remember when you’re writing for biology because writing in biology requires that you frame any experimental description with the “why” behind your research.

Further, because biology is a natural science, it adheres to the principles of the scientific method, requiring objectivity, reproducibility, and quantitative results. For these reasons it’s important to communicate clearly and efficiently in a style that reflects this objectivity and relies on quantitative values rather than vague words like “more” or “greater.”

While there is a convention-driven style to a lot of science writing in which you follow established norms, a good scientist thinks creatively about the field, where the gaps are, and where they can contribute. In this way, there is always room within the individual sections and their connecting links to explain ideas in an innovative way, ask creative questions, and propose new ideas for future research.

Evidence. Because biology is a natural science, the only kind of data you should use is empirical, reproducible data you have collected yourself or data from a peer-reviewed, secondary source published in a scholarly journal. Quoting is generally discouraged, although there are exceptions for research papers, proposals, or grants.

Conventions and Tips.
- Don’t write your paper in the order it’s presented to you in the template. It’s easier to reverse-engineer your paper by starting with figures, tables, and the methods and results sections, and then working your way through the discussion, finishing with your title and introduction. This approach will allow you to focus the information that you include in your introduction so that it is relevant to the rest of the experiment rather than wasting time writing about things that aren’t relevant.
- Rely on the formatting given to you by your professors. Specifically ask your professor about whether they prefer active or passive voice—this issue is still up for debate in science writing, and different professors (and different branches of the field) have different policies.

5.4 Writing for Business

Business is a social science, making it part of a distinct group of disciplines that use scientific methods to study individual and social behavior. Among these disciplines, business is uniquely oriented toward the professional world outside of purely academic domains. Its professional focus can be unfamiliar and can sometimes disconcert new writers. Read through these guidelines to get a better idea of how to write for business.

Genres. The typical genres you’ll be writing in for business are short memos—in which you will brief your audience with the relevant and pressing facts of a situation—and case studies, which consist of three parts: an introduction, in which you will provide appropriate historical and contextual information about a business or company; a strategic analysis section, in which you will identify and analyze structural and organizational problems with that business or company; and a final section, in which you will recommend solutions for those problems. Other typical genres include position papers, in which you will present a disputable issue from one side; research papers, for which you will research a topic and present that research to support a thesis; literature reviews, in which you will summarize and analyze secondary sources relevant to a specific topic; and personal reflections.

Purpose. “Writing is used in decision-making.” The purpose of writing for business classes isn’t exactly the same as the purpose of writing in the professional business world: classes are specifically designed for you to practice and improve your writing skills, whereas the professional world is often more results oriented. For this reason, academic papers are generally more focused and less broad than professional ones so that you will have enough time to do a thorough job. Despite the difference between class and the professional world, you should treat the business essays you write as though they were directed at a real professional audience. Accordingly, because your imagined audience is made up of practicing professionals, it’s important to remember that, whereas in most other disciplines you are only trying to persuade someone to believe something, in business you are trying to persuade someone to believe something so that they will do something. You can think of your writing as a tool you can use to have a direct impact on a person’s, company’s, or government’s actions.

Valued Characteristics. “Don’t make your reader do the work. You need to do all the work.” Writing for business should be as direct, simple, concise, and accurate as possible—don’t use too many adjectives or try to sound poetic. Although this spare style of writing may feel impersonal, there are very important reasons to use it. The writing done for business in the professional world is used directly in decision-making. In consequence, the conventions of business writing are oriented toward informing your readers so that they can make their decisions as accurately and efficiently as possible. By being direct and simple, you allow your audience to understand the situation and ideas you are describing while simultaneously making it clear to that audience that you understand the situation and are a competent source. By being concise, you show that you are efficient and that you value your readers’ time, and by being accurate you
show your reader that you are willing to be honest and realistic.

Further, within these guidelines there is room to be creative: an important part of business writing is innovation. In the last part of many business papers (such as case studies) you will be asked to suggest possible solutions to the problem or question you’ve outlined in the body of your paper. This is a place in your writing where you get to think innovatively about the possible futures and outcomes of various choices, and present your ideas about how best to implement strategies to ensure the best possible future. In this part of your writing it’s particularly important to be value neutral: these possible solutions are not about what a person should do; these possible solutions are about what a person or company can do.

Evidence. When you’re providing evidence in a business paper, the kinds of evidence you’ll want to rely on will come largely from peer-reviewed publications. In business scenarios, quantifiable evidence is usually the most persuasive, so using figures and situating data in its dated time period are key to building a reliable, accurate argument.

Conventions and Tips.

- Proofread your paper for spelling and grammar. While grammar may seem less important to some writers, imagine that you are a business executive sending an email to your staff. If the email you send has spelling errors in the first sentence you could lose credibility and professionalism in the eyes of your readers.

- You can use subheadings to organize your papers. While subheadings are discouraged in some disciplines, feel free to use them for business papers to add extra clarity and formality.

- Don’t use clichés, contractions, or passive clauses. And while personal pronouns are okay, don’t start a sentence with “I think.” While these rules may seem overly fastidious, it’s important to follow them so that your writing is both professional and reflective of your own distinctive voice. Using clichés is counterproductive to both of these values because they aren’t your own words and they are not particularly professional. Further, starting a sentence with “I think” can sound demure rather than convincing. And finally, using passive clauses rather than active ones can sometimes emphasize the responsibility or actions of the subject of a sentence. Write actively to ensure that your prose is fluid and compelling.

Additional Resources. You can find good writing samples in annual reports (at http://www.AnnualReports.com). The best way to become a good writer for business is to read good business writing.
5.5 Writing for Chemistry

Writing can sometimes seem like an obstacle for science students. Within scientific culture, the importance of effective communication is often underemphasized. This underemphasis leads many students entering college to see science writing as, at best, a necessary evil, and at worst, a tangled mess of jargon and arbitrary formatting. So far from being true, the exact opposite is the case. In the wise words of Professor Steven Neshyba, “Science is in the communication. Science doesn’t exist in someone’s head. The science is the communication.” To learn more about how to be an effective science writer, read this guide!

Genres. Writing in chemistry is challenging for new students since there are many different types of writing in chemistry. However, most of these genres can be broken down into a shared set of sections, each with its own distinctive style and purpose: a title, an abstract, an introduction, an experimental section, a results section, a discussion, a conclusion, and a literature cited. Together, these sections make up the most fundamental genre in chemistry writing: research articles (i.e., lab reports). Further, these sections also make up the research posters, review articles, and research proposals you’ll be introduced to in upper-level classes. The only kind of writing in chemistry not made up by these sections is the notes you’ll take in your laboratory notebook.

Purpose. The purpose of chemistry writing depends on the genre. A lab notebook is meant to be fairly informal, but clear and detailed enough that another chemist unfamiliar with the experiment you’re doing could open up your notebook and repeat the experiment. Keeping this kind of detailed record of your lab work will allow you to go back later and understand what it was you did in lab. In turn, understanding what you did will give you the context you need to write an informed lab report and thus make the process much easier.

These lab reports are formal papers that are meant to be places for you to practice sorting through, presenting and analyzing data. Further, lab reports also give you practice deepening your understanding of what you did in lab by allowing you to see your knowledge gaps and fill them by looking things up or asking your classmates and professor. Last but not least, lab reports are the avenues of communicating your results to faculty and other scientists, making them the crucial places where science really occurs.

Valued Characteristics. “Brevity may be the soul of wit, but it is the cerebrum of good science writing.”

When you write for chemistry, be clear, concise, and precise. In art, ambiguity is often ripe with meaning, but in scientific writing ambiguity is distracting. One of the most common writing errors chemistry students make is being vague when they should be precise. Don’t say “the product was obtained in good yield” when you could just as easily say “the aldehyde 3 was obtained in 64% yield,” a statement that contains much more useful information for other scientists trying to replicate your experiment.

Despite the importance of clarity, being precise shouldn’t prevent you from telling a story with your data: structuring a lab report as a narrative is a higher-level skill that can turn a seemingly mundane paper into a compelling one. Your Title provides a hook to draw in the reader; then the Introduction sets the narrative background and poses the problem that needs solving; the
Experimental and Results sections show how your protagonist has interrogated nature, and the answers they have gained; and then the Discussion puts the results in context with other results cited in the Intro (by either verifying or contesting them) while forcing you to explain why this might be. Of course there are often questions left unanswered, or new questions that arose in the course of the work; these then appear at the end of the Discussion to entice the reader to look for the sequel (that is, the reader’s own subsequent research).

Evidence. “A figure saves a thousand words.”

Evidence in chemistry—as in all natural sciences—is exclusively empirical, reproducible data from experiments you have done yourself or from a peer-reviewed, scholarly source. As the quote marking this subsection suggests, it can be very helpful to organize your results and explain the context you give in your introduction using figures and tables. These tables and figures are a powerful way to harness your evidence if you pair them with descriptive captions and embed them in the text of your lab report. That said, figures and tables don’t replace words: don’t include a figure if you don’t explain it in text!

Conventions and Tips.

- Don’t write from beginning to end. Many students think they should write a report in the order that it appears, but this is often an inefficient way to write a research paper—the abstract comes immediately after the title, but it should normally be written last, because it is easier to summarize the research after you’ve written the entire report and have thus refined your understanding of the research. Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach, here is an order that is usually effective: Organize your thoughts and your data, write the Experimental Section, prepare the important illustrations (i.e., Tables, Figures, and Schemes), write the Results section (using the illustrations as a guide), draft an outline of the Discussion section, write the Introduction, complete the Discussion Section, write the Conclusions, add References, write the Title and Abstract.

- Start early and get help if needed. Usually professors won’t have time to go over your whole draft, so make sure you go into office hours or send an email with a few specific questions for them to answer.

- Know your audience. You are writing for other chemists with a similar level of knowledge to your own but who are not familiar with the exact experiments you performed. You don’t have to go into gory detail about procedures that any chemist should know—it is even OK to use a little jargon if it is part of the chemist’s lexicon. For example, “the reaction was heated at reflux for 2 hours” is perfectly clear to any chemist who has taken organic chemistry.

- Delete superfluous words: don’t say “the melting point was determined to be 198–199ºC,” say “the melting point is 198–199ºC.”
• Chemical names are not capitalized (unless they are trade names).
• All manuscripts should be double-spaced (unless otherwise).
• Use the proper number of significant figures when reporting data.
• Always put a space between a number and its units.
• Always put a zero in front of a decimal value, otherwise a decimal can be mistaken for a period.
• Use the correct citation style.
• Write in pen in your lab notebook. You’ll find out why, if you spill something!

Additional Sources. *Journal of the American Chemical Society.*

Collins Memorial Library online “Chemistry: Subject Guide” at [http://research.pugetsound.edu/chem](http://research.pugetsound.edu/chem)—there’s even a tab on “Writing and Citing”!

5.6 Writing for English

Many students entering college think they know what writing for an English class should be like: While most students haven’t taken a psychology or Science, Technology, and Society class, the majority of students have taken several English classes before college and have prior experience writing English papers. Depending on their experiences, students may believe that English writing is congenitally imprecise and emotional because it is founded on subjective opinions rather than facts because “there are no right answers.” Alternately, students may think that English papers are brittle five-paragraph essays that impoverish the texts that they analyze. While these assumptions can be hard to displace, English essays are neither unsubstantiated opinions nor life-sucking exercises in pedantry. Rather, English essays can be powerful transformations of your impressions and emotions of a text into a substantiated analysis that reveals the more profound underpinnings of that text. Read this guide to get an idea of how to get the most out of writing for English!

Genres. “Close reading is the meat and potatoes—or the tofu and seitan—of what we do.”

Although you’ll be asked to write in scads of different genres for your English classes, close readings are the foundation on which all English writing rests. Close readings are essentially papers that ask you to move beyond saying *that* something exists in a text (for instance, alliteration), to *how* it’s used: That is, what it suggests in relation to other elements of the text, and why that realization matters. Longer papers in English classes can take the form of open-ended research papers, or analysis of the relationships between a text and its historical moment; however, these longer papers are built upon extended close readings for which you will have developed a theoretical framework. Other genres in English include many kinds of creative writing, such as personal essays, memoirs, and poetry, as well as book reviews or letters. You may be asked to write
in these creative genres in traditional English classes as well as creative writing English classes.

**Purpose.** “We are not teaching, for the most part, content, as much as we’re teaching habits of mind and skills. ... We are asking students to become practitioners of the genres and the forms that we ourselves work in.”

The purpose of writing in English classes is to become a better writer and a better reader. In your English classes your professors don’t want you to put on an analytic production just for the professor’s eyes; rather, you are being asked to take a step in a larger series of conversations that will allow you to practice habits of mind and transferable analytical skills. Hopefully these habits of mind will include a deeper appreciation for the profound and subtle ways language shapes our imagined realities, as well as how our own theoretical biases affect how we read a text.

**Valued Characteristics.** “Show me that I’m progressing. ... I want to feel like I’m learning with the paper.”

Writing for English, perhaps more so than any other discipline, emphasizes the process or craft of an essay rather than the product. This emphasis is inherent to the discipline because English is so consummately qualitative: you are not presenting quantitative data or known observations and conclusions. Rather you are making a qualitative analysis that puts your data (your textual observations) into a meaningful pattern and then commenting on the overall meaning or effect of that pattern. In this way, the form of an English essay is just as important as its content: how you have organized your ideas and presented them is just as important as the ideas themselves. For this reason English papers should not be like lists of evidence; rather, they should show the development of an argument over the course of an essay, with each paragraph advancing the argument.

Because the writer’s process of thought is so important to the English essay, your professors will tell you that good reading is the beginning of good writing and that the process of good reading is itself good thinking: how you read will be reflected in how you write—meaning that to be able to write well you yourself must think critically, take notes, and make observations while you read instead of merely absorbing the words on the page.

One aspect of English essays that can be a stumbling block to students is also the thing that can make it so rewarding: Far from having a single correct answer, texts have a multitude of possible solutions and interpretations. Because there is no absolute, definitive interpretation, many students can be caught in the difference between opinions and arguments: sometimes it can feel unnerving to make an interpretive leap because you think that it isn’t 100% certain—but that’s actually the nature of the claims we make as English writers: while they are substantiated, they are fundamentally arguable. An arguable claim is different from an opinion in that arguments are substantiated by textual evidence while opinions are not.

**Evidence.** “Evidence is two parts: textual evidence (quotes and paraphrases) and analysis.”

Evidence in English is almost exclusively textual; however, textual evidence is not “evidence” in itself! When you include textual evidence it should be because its specific language or mechanical aspects are “meaningful in a way that is irreducible”; that is, it would be impossible to rephrase the language in any other way without losing some important part of the meaning. However
the meaning that you see in the textual evidence is not self-evident: when you include textual evidence you must always use your own words to explain how it is meaningful to your argument.

Conventions and Tips.

• When you get an essay back, carefully consider the comments your professor has made. Professors put a lot of time and thought into writing them. These comments are a great way not only to improve your writing but also serve as the beginning of a conversation you can have with your professor during office hours.

• Although English writing has a reputation for being florid and ornate, as in every other discipline, good writing is clear writing. Don’t use as many adverbs as possible or sacrifice clarity and coherence for an elevated register.

• Make sure you’re telling your reader exactly what you want them to think. Don’t make your reader intuit your argument.

• If you don’t know something, look it up! Answering your own questions is part of the writing process. You have the vast power of the Internet at your fingertips! If you’re having trouble doing this on your own, schedule a writing appointment or get in touch with a librarian!

• You can get better with each assignment, but you’re not going to become a top-tier English scholar in one assignment, or even one semester. Don’t get discouraged! Focus on getting better.

• A thesis can be more than one sentence! And it doesn’t have to be at the end of the first paragraph.

• You can use the first person, but use it carefully. Use I when you need to acknowledge that your view diverges from others’ views or when you need to be clear about some aspect of your methods which you personally did (One did not review a year’s worth of newspapers; I did).

• Don’t hide behind an I to say that it’s just little old me who thinks something, but that it’s probably not right; however, some hedging is good! You don’t have to “prove” something beyond a shadow of a doubt; you can be circumspect and use words like “suggests” or “indicates” to acknowledge where the evidence isn’t strong enough to make a bolder claim.

• Introduce the authors of your secondary sources in text. This helps establish context and shows that you are entering into a conversation with other scholars.

Additional Resources. The Oxford English Dictionary (or the OED, for short) is a great place to look for the history and meaning of words. When you
encounter words in older texts that seem to have different meanings, you can see if the meaning of those words has changed over time. You can also use the OED to make a point about the double meaning of a particular word. And, of course, you can look for words whose meanings you don’t know. Puget Sound students have access to the OED through Primo at Collins Library.

5.7 Writing for History

Among scholars, historians are unique in their pursuit of knowledge from pasts that only get further away rather than clearer as time goes on. The difficulty of sometimes vast amounts of elapsed time combined with the intense and often bewildering particularity of different historical moments can make writing academically about history challenging for students. Read this guide to get an idea of how to think about your task as a historian in training!

Genres. Of the several kinds of writing you will be asked to do in your history classes, close readings of a primary source are perhaps the most foundational. A close reading is a paper in which you develop an analytical argument that takes into account the historical context the source is from. The skills you use to write a primary source close reading are transferable to the secondary source critiques that you will be asked to write. Another way to think of these critiques is as a way to “test other scholars.” Other history papers include papers that put primary and secondary sources in conversation with one another, annotated bibliographies, research prospectuses and comparisons of a historian’s versus a popular source’s version of an event to elucidate the difference between how historians and how others think about the past.

Purpose. “[The purpose] is two-fold: firstly writing is a creative process, so we figure things out as we write, … but the end goal is to understand the people of the past and why they did things the way they did.”

Unlike writing in many other academic disciplines, most good historical writing is open and accessible to the general reader. Part of the purpose of historical writing, then, is to bring the stories and patterns of the past to the attention of modern readers. Within these stories and patterns are the figures of the past. These figures can sometimes seem very strange, they can seem evil, they can seem funny, but they are ultimately human beings, and your task as a historian is to make sense of them from their perspectives to the extent to which that’s possible—and it’s a task that is, in fact, impossible. And that’s part of what you can love about it: Your job is to try to make sense of a puzzle, always knowing that you can’t quite get there.

Valued Characteristics. “Imagination is really important. “Analytical” for us isn’t like looking through a microscope, but having to really imagine, and being willing to think about things in new ways.”

Writing for history can be very difficult because you are, in essence, being asked to disregard what you know—what your present has taught you—and recreate a world that you have never seen and that has ceased existing. For this reason, historical writing is an act of inquiry that is both logical and imaginative. To be a good historian you must begin by making observations and then use these observations to ask good questions that will help you reimagine the past in a new way or to find the gaps in existing ways of understanding
These questions and new ways of seeing will allow you to gain a deeper knowledge of the past and, hopefully, a deeper empathy for its figures.

A second important part of writing historically is understanding that making a historical argument does not mean disregarding your sources to write what you want; rather, it means to allow your observations to help you make a convincing argument by presenting them in the truest possible way: historians feel they have an ethical responsibility to not abuse their evidence, to not do violence to the sources of the past, to not force a source to say something that it did not intend to say. For this reason, when you make an interpretive leap you must justify it so that you do not misrepresent a source.

This second characteristic of historical writing is often called being “value neutral.” However, being value neutral doesn’t mean that historians don’t see things as right and wrong—instead it means that in order to actually be able to distinguish one from the other a historian must first begin by understanding the people of the past—and you can’t do that unless you have put aside your own moral lens long enough to figure them out. Putting aside your lenses is, indeed, the thing that will allow you to ask the questions you will need to ask in order to imagine the past—questions that are not merely factual, that are not anachronistic or judgmental, but analytical.

Evidence. “We can’t run experiments, or recreate the French Revolution in a test tube, so we have to make use of the surviving evidence.”

History is a “quoting disciple”—you’ll need to use quotes from your primary sources to make supportable claims. However, writing for history will also give you the opportunity to use non linear textual evidence at times, such as maps, historical artifacts, and art.

Conventions and Tips.

- It is fundamental to historical writing that you put your sources in context. Without this contextualization, your analysis may be anachronistic.

- Secondary sources aren’t proof. Don’t use theories as facts, instead use them to frame your argument rather than “prove” it.

- Because you want to appeal to non expert readers, avoid jargon. If you absolutely need technical terminology, then be sure to define your terms.

- Avoid the counterfactual. Write about what happened, not what would have, should have, or could have happened.

- Don’t make broad claims or generalizations about human nature. Instead work to preserve the particularity of the past.

- When writing historically, chronological order should be your default way to organize, however, don’t be limited by chronology if your paper would be clearer organized another way (e.g., thematically, by historical figures or groups).

- Write in the past tense!

- Citations are important. Use the Chicago style in general.
Additional Resources. Some good resources on writing in history include *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* by Mary Lynn Rampolla, Patrick Rael’s guides at Bowdoin College, and the Harvard University Style Guide.

5.8 Writing for Music and Music History

While everyone has heard, and probably even played, music, writing about it is an entirely different province; so even if you are the most ardent music-lover, be prepared to find writing about music unfamiliar. Read this guide to learn more about the skills you will need to write well about music.

Genres. “It’s a pay-attention sort of paper.”

Some music-writing genres—the sort that require extensive knowledge of terminology—are limited to music majors and include analytical papers in which you will look at a score and make an argument about it using technical descriptions of its subtleties as evidence. Other music-writing genres—which do not require heavy amounts of technical vocabulary—will be assigned to both majors and non-majors. These less technical papers include a version of the analytical paper, where you write a listening guide for a piece of music; book reviews, patterned after professional book reviews, where you review books dealing with musical issues; field work papers, where you analyze the interaction between music and culture on or off campus; reception histories, where you describe the reception of a particular composer when they were alive, and analyze why and how that reception changed over time; broader versions of reception histories, where you take a work where there is a critical mass of scholarship and then combine analysis, history, and criticism of that work; performance reports, informal pieces of writing where you describe what you heard at a performance, what the event was like, and how the audience responded; as well as conventional research papers.

Purpose. “If you don’t write your ideas down, no one will know them.”

Like most endeavors, writing academically about music has many entwined purposes. First of all, writing about music will help you learn about music. This will mean going beyond your subjective reaction to a score and exploring the details of its artistry. Further, by learning to write well about music, you will also foster writing skills that you will be able to apply to other kinds of writing that you will do in future. Still more, by writing papers about music, you will be joining a scholarly conversation, whose complex and multifarious voices will push you to evaluate complex arguments and learning how to persuade others yourself.

Valued Characteristics. “How the heck do you write about sound?”

One of the greatest stumbling blocks for new music writers can sometimes be the thing that drew you to music in the first place; we have all heard music, and we love it and know how important it is. But being able to transform that love into a profound and specific analysis of the “hows” and “whys” of a chosen piece of music is an exercise in patience and practice. But hang in there! That exercise will lead you to a deeper appreciation for music than you began with.

When you are writing about texts, you are using words to analyze words. However, when writing about musical texts, the thing you are analyzing is sound, which is invisible. So in order to write well about music you will need
to meaningfully translate what you hear into writing.

When you are trying to do the work of such meaningful translation, when you are listening to and looking at a score, there will always be an infinite number of ways of looking at it, some of which are more persuasive and reasonable than others. In order to write persuasively, and choose which way to “look” at a score or even a book, the most important thing to keep in mind is to go beyond description. While description is a great starting point—because good description ensures that you are paying attention and noticing what is unusual—analysis requires explaining why that something is unusual or significant.

Evidence. “We have a broader definition of text ... music is a text, performance is a text.”

In your music classes, just like your English and history classes, evidence is almost exclusively textual. However in music-writing, scores and performances are also considered to be texts, and accurate descriptions of them are what constitute evidence. Unlike in the sciences, you won’t be creating evidence yourself (by doing an experiment), instead you are finding evidence in secondary sources and by your own observation.

Conventions and Tips.

- Describing music involves using a series of agreed-upon metaphors (e.g. a wet sound v. a dry sound). While such terminology can be daunting, it can be very helpful when writing about sound.

- With the above tip in mind, there is sometimes a misconception that when you are writing about music it has to be really jargon-laden and technical. If you are uncomfortable with writing about music, it is always better to say what you have to say clearly rather than throwing words out like a cloud of squid ink.

- Because music takes place in time, there is a tendency to work your way through a piece that you are writing about from beginning to end. Part of mastery is not being stuck doing this kind of “inchworm” writing. If you notice yourself using “and then” a lot, think about whether you could organize your thoughts in a more persuasive way.

- Make sure to refer specifically to the measure in a score or the timing in a recording when describing a musical piece.

Additional Resources.

- A Short Guide to Writing About Music by Jonathan D. Bellman

5.9 Writing for Psychology

Psychology presents unique challenges to student writers: It can be difficult to navigate between quantitative scientific data and the ineluctably qualitative arguments that you’ll need to make about human behavior. Read this guide to get a better idea of what it’s important to focus on while writing for psychology!

Genres. There are two main kinds of writing in psychology. The first is research reports, in which you will convey to your audience the research you have done, the reason you did it, what method you did it by, and the results and conclusions you arrived at. The second type of writing you will do is literature reviews, in which you will write papers focused on canvassing a particular area of research to generate new conclusions about that area. Another type of writing you may be asked to do that is less common is translational writing, in which you will be asked to “translate” scientific writing for general audiences.

Purpose. “If your grandmother is a reasonably smart person and she’s still alive and she’s never majored in psychology, and if she can’t understand your paper from beginning to end, there’s probably something wrong with it.”

The purpose of writing in psychology is, at its most fundamental level, to communicate our understanding of behavior and mental processes. Because knowledge in psychology can make a good and meaningful difference in the lives of people, it is paramount that your writing is understandable. In order to promote meaningful change in people’s lives, you must first be able to communicate the findings of empirical research effectively to both other scientists and larger audiences.

Traits and Characteristics. “The goal is to be honest.”

Because psychology is a science and psychological writing is used to change how individuals and societies think about and treat others, it is crucial that arguments are made honestly and using empirical data. In your essays, it’s therefore important that you prioritize presenting your data fairly over pushing your own interpretation of the data. Instead, while you make your argument you should allow room for alternate explanations: be honest about what you know and what you don’t know and recognize the limitations of your argument.

In your attempt to be as honest as possible with your findings, you will be aided by being precise and concise rather than ambiguous and flowery. It is difficult to be straightforward if your writing is confusing or vague about what your results actually are and how you obtained them.

While presenting the facts of your research clearly and plainly is vital, it is equally important to “go beyond the data” by writing about its applied relevance in interdisciplinary and ethical spaces.

Evidence. “In psychology, you can almost never see the thing you want to know ...”

The data you use should be empirical rather than textual. For this reason, a theory from a secondary source is not evidence, and most professors discourage the use of quotes. However, while psychological data is scientific, how you interpret it is inherently qualitative. While in the natural sciences, for example, if you want to know the temperature at which a metal melts, you can take a thermometer and watch and see when it melts and you’ll know the answer: you can observe the physical process you want to know about directly. In psychology you can almost never see the psychological process you want to
know about because it’s inside a person. For example, you could have an idea that a pharmaceutical increases hunger and then, when you give this pharmaceutical to people they eat more. Did the pharmaceutical increase hunger? Possibly. That’s a good possible explanation for what happened, but you didn’t see hunger, you just saw eating and you have to make a link between what you saw (which was people eating) and the underlying thing you think is in there (which is hunger). In this way, while the data you collect are wholly scientific, the way you choose to explain that evidence is, by nature, conjectural.

**Conventions and Tips.**

- Psychology writing operates on the sometimes subtle differentiation between broad generalizations and possible explanations. For this reason, writing in psychology relies on the “tentative tone.” Don’t say “love is dangerous,” instead say “love can be dangerous” and add supporting evidence, allowing room for other conclusions.

- Writing in psychology seeks to de-emphasize the “who” and instead focus on the “what.” For this reason don’t “call on experts” or name-drop the authors of your secondary sources in text as you would in other disciplines. Cite them, but don’t introduce them formally.

**Additional Resources.** The 6th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (also known informally as the *APA Writing Manual*) is a great place to look for more technical writing instructions.
Puget Sound’s Threshold 2020 Diversity Strategic Plan states:

We at Puget Sound intentionally conceptualize and view diversity as a matter of equity and inclusion. In doing so, we aim to understand and actively respond to the ways organizational aspects of our society and of our own university often work against those principles, excluding some groups and individuals from our community while including others. The work of diversity, accordingly, seeks to account for and redress deeply embedded historical practices and legacies, forms of cultural and social representation, and institutional policies and processes that can systematically exclude groups or individuals from full participation in higher education and the considerable benefits it offers.

Language use is part of this work of diversity; as writers, we are also part of that work. While the impacts of language on individual feelings and circumstances may, on the surface, seem insignificant (“sticks and stones,” as the adage goes), language can embody prejudice, discrimination, and status hierarchies. Words, like people and societies, have histories. Some words, such as racial slurs, are overtly bigoted, while others more subtly express longstanding stereotypes or attitudes about particular groups of people. For instance, patronizing and parochial treatment of specific languages or linguistic types derives from discrimination and intolerance of groups who speak those languages.

By acknowledging the role language plays in reinforcing inequalities, we recognize the privileges and disadvantages of different groups of people. Additionally, using words rooted in hate and oppression perpetuates hate and oppression and denies groups of people opportunities to reclaim their individual and collective agency. However, if we are unfamiliar with such histories, it can sometimes be difficult to identify terminologies of oppression.

This chapter aims to offer different ways for us, as scholars and citizens of the world, to be intentional about and ethical in the language we use. We have attempted to clarify terms and provide more inclusive, equality-based alternatives, and we hope that these will help us all as writers to be aware of and attentive to the diversity of experiences that our audiences will have.

Because terms and preferences vary and change, we have compiled only general guidelines, and our suggestions should be considered in the contexts of their usages. Please also note that each section deals with a complex subject, and there are excellent resources here on campus for learning more. We make suggestions in each section below about departments and programs that
offer relevant courses, but our suggestions are not comprehensive. Looking for courses that fulfill the Knowledge, Identity, and Power (KNOW) graduation requirement is another good way to find relevant courses. Get involved in the Race and Pedagogy Institute (RPI) or in programs offered through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

We’ve tried to be as nuanced as possible in a short space, but, there are surely things we have missed and things we still need to learn. However, just as language can change, so, too, can this handbook. If you would like to suggest any improvements to the guidelines that follow, please email us at soundwriting@pugetsound.edu.

6.1 Writing with Respect

Writing with respect is a crucial component of writing with awareness. By demonstrating to your readers that you strive to be aware and respectful of their various identities and experiences, you make your writing more inclusive and inviting—and make it more likely that your audience will engage with your ideas.

To write respectfully about other people, it is helpful to be aware of our own identities and positionalities. We are all informed by our experiences, and it is not always easy to recognize how our cultural lenses affects our worldviews. We are all, to some degree, ethnocentric; we know our own culture (and gender, ability, race, sexuality, class, religion, etc.) best, and we cannot help but view and evaluate other cultures through our own experiences; we may even implicitly consider our own identity to be superior to that of others, and it may take explicit attention to remember that there are other equally valid lifestyles and experiences. In order to write with awareness, then, we should avoid writing ethnocentrically.

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you write:

- Am I making broad generalizations, or do I write with complexity and nuance about people who are different than me? Am I considering other perspectives respectfully rather than in a patronizing or paternalistic way?
- Am I making value judgments about other ways of living? If so, are they appropriate to the specific discipline or course for which I’m writing?
- Do I use thorough and fair scholarly sources?
- Are all of my claims supported with evidence?
- Do my warrants (the logic connecting my evidence to my claims) rely on Western/American definitions or world-views (for example, evidence: a certain group of people still uses hunting and gathering as its primary mode of subsistence; claim: people in this group are uncivilized; warrant: “civilization” is defined by advanced agriculture)?
- Am I aware of my own cultural biases and mindful about how they might affect my scholarship and language choices?

Here are some tips for writing with respect:

**Write with specificity** Don’t make generalizations about groups of people. No individual represents an entire group, and individuals cannot be wholly defined by the groups they are in.
Write with attention and the desire to keep learning Don’t intentionally write harmful, bigoted, or ignorant statements about people or groups of people. If you’re unsure of whether or not what you’re writing is harmful, do some research or ask people who have a greater knowledge of the group in question, preferably someone within that group.

Write with equity Don’t make marginalization central to your discussion of marginalized individuals or groups, unless marginalization is the topic at hand. For instance, a woman of color can be a scientist—just as someone with a less culturally marked identity can be. When you write about a woman of color who is a scientist, unless the focus of your writing is how her identity has impacted her professional life, concentrate on the science she does.

Use your best judgement about using people–first language People–first language, can be an important way to emphasize a person rather than one aspect of their identity. For example, saying “She is an asthmatic” can emphasize her disability while “She is a person who has asthma,” emphasizes that she is a person first—a person who may also be a parent, a teacher, and a person with any number of other significant identities. At the same time, there is no universal preference for people–first language; there are many situations where person–first language might actually be more awkward or inappropriate. For example, many members of the Autistic community are resisting being called “a person with Aspergers” as opposed to Autistic or Aspie, saying this IS a central part of their personhood and that the other theoretically more inclusive language is dismissive of their experience. This is similar to how we would not call a black person “A person with blackness.” When writing, do some research and use your best judgment to determine if you should use people–first language, and whenever possible use the language preferred by the people or community you are writing about.

6.2 Inclusive Language

6.2.1 Intersectionality

At the root of writing with awareness is an understanding of intersectionality. “Intersectionality” is a new term to describe a very old concept. However, despite its frequent use, there remains a great deal of misunderstanding about what the term actually means (even among scholars!). Consequently, the aim of this guide is to help you begin thinking about intersectionality, and ultimately write more inclusively about identity.

Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how marginalized individuals and groups of people face complex and interlocking forms of oppression due to the overlapping nature of their identities.
The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Black feminist lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how the discrimination faced by Black women is simultaneously based on race and gender. In a seminar at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Crenshaw used the metaphor of a traffic intersection to describe how women of color must simultaneously navigate multiple forms of oppression saying “intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group ... tries to navigate the main crossing in the city.... The main highway is Racism Road. One cross street can be Colonialism, [the other] Patriarchy Street.” Rather than navigate each road in isolation of the others, the woman of color must navigate them all at the same time, their interaction making her task that much more complex. Accordingly, because everyone has intersectional identities oppressive systems are not navigated separately concurrently. Thus, when intersectionality is overlaid with power imbalances, those with multiple marginalized identities—such as being Black and female in the U.S., or disabled, Queer and poor—experience oppression and discrimination against several aspects of their identity.

**Intersections within an identity.**

Latino is not one identity. Someone who identifies as Afro-Latino is probably going to have a very different experience than someone with lighter skin and hair. It’s important to acknowledge that not only do we have different national identities, but there are also other differences within those places.

—Member of Latinx Unidos
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

**Identity and the cultural context.**

Gendered expectations in different cultures are just different. So what we in American view as masculine expectations are very much not masculine expectations in a large variety of Asian cultures...When you’re going to do research about, like, the intersections of gender in Asia you really need to think about why is it that we gender Asia a certain way, why is it that like when we think about Asian American men we think that they’re really like feminine, really castrated, really nerdy, non-social, those kind of things. But then on
the other hand, Pacific Islander men, and just Brown men in general, get hypersexualized; it’s sometimes assumed that the darker your skin is the more sexual you are, and then the lighter your skin is the more virginal and pure you are.

—Member of the Asian and Pacific Islander Collective
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

While the term intersectionality was initially coined to describe the struggles of Black women in the feminist movement, it can be used even more broadly to understand how systems of oppression are interconnected, and how individuals and groups face discrimination based on multiple identities. As you write, consider the ways that intersectionality applies to your topic. For example, if you are writing about salaries in the United States, explore how they intersect with gender (e.g., men make more money than women, gender non-conforming, and trans people), race (e.g., white women make more money than women of color), and ability (people with mental and physical illnesses have a harder time acquiring and keeping jobs than their able-bodied counterparts). At the same time, be careful about highlighting an aspect of someone’s identity if it may not actually be relevant (see the guideline in Section 6.1 which contains other important notes about people–first language and writing with specificity). As you write, we encourage you to use the following subsections in conjunction with one another.

6.2.2 Language towards gender inclusivity

Sexism, which we define below, refers to discrimination of individuals based on sex. As the definition notes, sexism has historically described discrimination specifically against women. The perceived social and biological inferiority of women has existed for centuries in the West (and also throughout the globe), and although women in the last century have made advances—the right to own property and vote, for example—sexism prevails, especially against women of color and trans women. Women still, on average, earn lower wages than men; women are much more likely than men to be raped or stalked; and women are still underrepresented in positions of power and leadership. Importantly, women of color, at the intersection of race and gender, face each of these challenges to a greater extent than White women. Examples of such intersectional injustices are how, on average, White and Asian American women make about 20% less than White men, while Black and Latina women make about 30 and 40% less than White men respectively or how female immigrants of color sometimes have to choose between reporting domestic abuse and facing deportation or detention. Part of writing with awareness and respect means that you as an author are attentive to the context of historical and current discrimination that women face and cognizant of how the choices you make in writing engage with that context.

Writing with attention to gender inclusivity, however, can be onerous because sexism is ingrained in English. As we wrote at the beginning of this chapter, language can embody prejudice, discrimination, and hierarchies. We have historically used the pronoun “he” as the standard, universal pronoun. In English, we have only “Mr.” for men (a title that is the same, regardless of men’s marital status), but “Miss” and “Mrs.” for women (titles that mark not only gender but also marital status as an essential component of a woman’s identity). We also have policemen, firemen, fishermen, and many other job ti-
titles that are used generically for all employees in the profession, even though women also work in those professions; many of those titles have female equivalents (policewoman, firewoman, fisherwoman), but those titles are never used generically to refer to all people in the profession—and gender is not necessarily important to the work involved in those job titles.

But language changes! “He” is no longer generally accepted as a universal pronoun, and alternatives like singular “they” have grown in popularity and acceptance. “Ms.” was created as a parallel title to “Mr.,” as titles that do not mark marital status. Professional titles such as “flight attendant,” instead of “stewardess,” offer gender-neutral job titles that emphasize the work the person does, rather than the gender of the person doing the work. These changes come not from grammarians; they come from people like you who saw injustice and acted against it. Keep reading to learn more about what you can do to continue to combat sexism in your speaking and writing.

**Helpful terms to know.** Here are some other guidelines to keep in mind while writing.

**Sexism** is discrimination against individuals, historically women, based on sex.

**Misogyny** refers to institutionalized or deeply held hate or prejudice toward women.

**Androcentrism** describes when masculinity is central to a particular entity or outlook.

**Heteronormativity** refers to the belief system that normalizes and prefers a patriarchal, heterosexual, and gender binary way of living.
Mix up the order If you refer frequently to men and women, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, etc., mix up the order to avoid putting one gender continually ahead of the other. In fact, unless gender is a central facet of your discussion, it’s better to avoid perpetuating gender binaries by using alternatives such as “distinguished guests,” “people,” “human beings,” “children,” “adults,” “individuals,” and “couples.”

Refer to women in the same way you would men If you wouldn’t say “Mr. Faulkner” when writing about Faulkner, then don’t say “Ms. Austen” when writing about Jane Austen. Similarly, if a woman holds a title like “Dr.,” then refer to her as Dr. in the same way you would refer to a male M.D. or Ph.D.

Avoid sexist descriptions and terminology Numerous English words are rooted in sexist ideas about how women should act and live. Terms like “barren,” “spinster,” “feisty,” “coy,” “shrill,” “emotional,” “hysterical,” “frumpy,” “exotic,” “ditzy,” and “catty” can all convey implicit judgments about women. Note: the word “exotic” in particular is an intersectionally oppressive word that has been historically applied to women of color. The word acts to reify Whiteness as the norm while in turn hypersexualizing women of color, and thus making them the targets of sexual violence.

Be conscious of gender stereotypes Pay attention to where you’re using certain pronouns. Saying, “The lawyer won his trial” and “The nurse couldn’t find her scrubs” are also forms of sexist language because they perpetuate gender stereotypes (i.e., the assumption that lawyers are always men and nurses are always women).

Be conscious of heteronormativity Women don’t always marry men. Women don’t always marry. To this effect, statements such as “He needs a girlfriend” or “She should get married” perpetuate heteronormative expectations.

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking courses in Gender and Queer Studies (GQS) would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in programs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

6.2.3 Language towards neuro—and physical inclusivity
What is considered an illness or disability has changed throughout history and also varies between cultural contexts. Disability has also been stigmatized and wielded as a form of social control; a member of the University of Puget Sound National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) gave the examples of both drapetomania, an illness that white psychologists hypothesized as the cause for Black slaves to want to run away from enslavement in the 19th century, and hysteria, which was used as a form of social control for women. Today, both of these illnesses are considered pseudoscience and understood to be part of a long history of scientific racism, and sexism respectively.

Despite the progress that has been made, disabilities and illnesses continue to be stigmatized, and the way we write about them has the power to break down or perpetuate stereotypes that directly affect the lives of people with
these conditions. Additionally, many terms carry historical baggage that we, as writers, aren’t always aware of; for instance, while in the early twentieth century people classified as “idiots” were subject to forced sterilization, we now use the word casually. By learning the history behind the words we use and choosing to write respectfully about people with mental and physical disabilities we help create a culture that rejects ableism.

Cultural context of mental health and illness.

This is why I’m always saying research those cultural contexts, you know, because with mental illness and mental health, the way in which we talk about it is all a form of social control.

—Member of NAMI
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Mental health and mental illness are frequently mistaken as synonyms; however, mental health refers to a person’s mental well-being—including their emotions, thoughts, feelings, and the ability to overcome challenging situations—while mental illnesses are disorders affecting the way one thinks, feels, behaves, or interacts with the world. Just as it is possible to have poor physical health (e.g. a broken arm) without having a physical illness, so too do many people experience poor mental health without having a mental illness. People may fall anywhere on the mental health and mental illness spectrums: for example, someone with a chronic mental illness such as OCD may have good mental health. Sometimes mental health concerns that go untreated can develop into mental illnesses, such as anxiety or depression. Additionally, where each of us falls on the health and illness spectrums is always changing, and we will all experience poor health at some point in our life.

In fact, one way of thinking about disability, is that any time we spend able-bodied is really time spent “temporarily able-bodied” since we will all experience disability in our lifetimes. Despite the widespread incidence of disability, disabilities are stigmatized in many cultures, and people with disabilities are discriminated against in both overt ways (such as the eugenics movement) and covert ways (such as buildings that lack wheelchair access and/or Braille translations). A member of the University of Puget Sound NAMI club described how mental illnesses are also sometimes regarded as less legitimate than physical illnesses because they are less visible, giving the example that people are more likely to consider it a sign of weakness to take medication for a mental illness than for a physical illness; just as you would not tell someone with diabetes that they should learn to stop depending on their insulin medication, so, too, would you not consider that someone with a mental illness should eventually grow out of taking their medication.

Intersections of Mental illness and health.

“Constantly considering the ways in which mental health and mental illness intersect with a lot of other identities is really important. They don’t exist in isolation from other people’s identities. They really intersect with your sexual orientation, your gender identity, your race, your socioeconomic background...you can’t really write about mental
As you write about mental and physical illnesses, be conscious of how they intersect with other aspects of identity. For example, as a member of the University of Puget Sound NAMI club points out, a woman with a mental illness is more likely to be written about as weak and emotional, while men with mental illness tend to be portrayed as violent and angry. These depictions perpetuate false stereotypes of both mental illness and gender. Additionally, the way physical and mental illnesses are conceptualized, diagnosed, and treated varies between different cultures, and factors such as immigration, racial discrimination, and expensive healthcare and medication make access to treatment inaccessible for many people. When writing about illnesses, health, and disability, avoid making broad generalizations, since people’s bodily experiences are dependent on a plethora of other aspects of their identities. Additionally, because of this diversity, the experience of a mental illness for one person is often not the same as for another, and a treatment that works for one person will not necessarily work for another. For more on the importance of writing with specificity, see Subsection 6.2.1 on intersectionality.

While it is impossible to foresee and prevent every knowledge gap, using people-first language is a way to combat ableism by acknowledging the common humanity of all individuals rather than referring to certain individuals only by their disability or handicap. What follows is a list of words to avoid as well as words that we hope you use to write and think more inclusively. Please consider these terms as an introduction into an ongoing conversation rather than a comprehensive guide, and continue to foster your awareness by continuing to learn and ask questions!

Terms.

**Ableist** crazy, confined to a wheelchair, defective, dumb, feebleminded, handicapped, idiotic, insane, invalid, lame, lunatic, manic, mental, moron, retard, psycho, psychotic, schizo, short-bus, spaz, simpleton, stupid, special/special needs, unbalanced, unstable

**Alternative** neurotypical/neurovariant/neurodivergent, with a/an (physical, mobility, intellectual, cognitive) disability, blind/low-vision, deaf/hard of hearing, uses a wheelchair/cane/walker/crutches, with a chronic health condition

Additional guidelines to keep in mind while writing.

**Do not write of individuals only in terms of their disabilities**

Just as with women and people from marginalized backgrounds, only refer to disabilities if they are relevant to what
you’re writing. For example, referencing a wheelchair in a sentence like “A man in a wheelchair let me borrow his pen” is unnecessary and ableist. However, relevantly referencing disabilities can be important: “My friend, who uses a wheelchair, was late to class because of limited accessibility on campus.”

**Use the “people-first” approach** When writing about people with disabilities, always put the person first. For example, say “a person with disabilities” rather than “a disabled person,” and “they are a person with schizophrenia” or “they have a diagnosis of schizophrenia” not “they are a schizophrenic.”

**Disabilities are adjectives, not nouns!** Just as you wouldn’t refer to transgender people as “transgenders,” so, too, would you not refer to people with disabilities as “the disabled.”

**A disability is a condition; a handicap is a constraint**

**Some disabilities are connected to cultural identities** For instance, one can be deaf (that is, have the physical condition of not being able to hear), and one can be part of the Deaf community (people who communicate in sign and who identify culturally as Deaf—including deaf people but also people who are close to deaf people, such as hearing children of deaf parents). Being deaf doesn’t necessarily mean being Deaf, and vice versa.

**Be careful choosing terms about disability status** Do not use terms like “normal” or “healthy” when referring to people without disabilities. Some people also object to the phrase “able-bodied.” Instead, use the term “people without disabilities.”

**Avoid sentimentality** Don’t write about people with disabilities (or other marginalized people) in terms of overly heroic or tragic narratives.

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Courses on Disability Studies are occasionally offered, and the webpage of the office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation offers educational resources.

### 6.2.4 Language Towards Racial and Ethnic Inclusivity

Writing about race and ethnicity is complex because both are linked to past and present histories of horrific oppression and intergroup conflict with correspondingly deep individual and group trauma. Both ethnicity and race can make people targets of stereotyping, prejudice, and violence, while they can also provide a sense of belonging or pride for people. Like most other identities, the categories of race and ethnicity have differed between places and across time. For example, in the United States, court cases such as *Dow v. United States (1915)* which determined that Syrian people were not “white,”
have been part of sculpting the racial categories we are familiar with today. Racial and ethnic categories continue to drastically impact all of our lives, and so, while complicated, it’s important to be aware of the histories behind the words we use and ways we write about race and ethnicity in order to not perpetuate racist ideologies.

**Race.** A socially constructed system of categories and affiliations based primarily on physical characteristics such as variations in hair, eyes, or skin color. Across most parts of the modern world, the construction of race is linked to inequalities in power and histories of oppression including discrimination and slavery.

**Ethnicity.** Generally refers to identities or affiliations based on cultural factors such as nationality, regional heritage, religion, and/or language.

Racial prejudice and racism, though related, are distinctly different; while racial prejudice is discrimination against someone because of their race, racism takes into account histories of racial inequality, and describes a system that benefits people in a dominant racial group (whether or not they want to benefit) through the oppression of other racial groups. It should be noted that because racism is dependent on past and present systemic racial inequality, “reverse racism” does not exist. Racism has manifested in many different ways, while some forms are overt, such as “Whites Only” signs during the Jim Crow era, other racist histories are embedded in language in less familiar ways. For example, the term “Caucasian” as a synonym for White has its origins in pseudo–scientific theories about the racial divisions. Although white–skinned people might feel uncomfortable with a racial descriptor such as White, using that term is one way to use equivalent terms; there is ethnocentric bias in assuming whiteness as a standard and using terms like Black, Asian, and Latino to designate people as different from that standard. Racism can also appear under the guise of being approving. For example, calling women of color “exotic” is both dehumanizing and contributes to the hypersexualization of women of color in the U.S. (among other places) and the high rates of sexual violence against them.

**Orientalism in language.**

“Oriental” is a word that people shouldn't use, unless they are directly quoting from somebody else that is using it in scholarly writing and is pointing out how that is an outdated, problematic term, but otherwise if they are making their own opinion, they should not write “this oriental” or “the orient.”

—Member of the Asian and Pacific Islander Collective
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Language changes, and we all need to be informed of current usages. For instance, in the contemporary United States, using the word “Black” as an adjective (as with “Black people”) is widely accepted as inoffensive. In contrast, the term “colored” was once widely used, but it is now generally considered inappropriate.

Another complexity is that people often identify with more than one group or category, and so writers may use terms like multi-racial or multi-ethnic.
One problem with these terms is that they render invisible specific racial and cultural identities, such as being Black and Asian; White and Puerto Rican; or Native American, Black, and Latina. As a writer, you should think critically about the assumptions and invisibilities reflected in choices you make when writing about race and ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing with Specificity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People really need to be more specific about what they’re talking about when they use the words “Asian” and “Pacific Islander.” If people are doing research that deals with empirical data and they use the word “Asian” when they’re searching, that data’s largely going to include Chinese, Japanese and maybe Korean Americans. And even within that there are problems with how we classify who is Chinese, [which can include Mandarin, Mainland, and Cantonese people] here’s just a lot of complexity in writing about our community that can’t really be distilled down into the labels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| —Member of the Asian and Pacific Islander Collective  
  University of Puget Sound  
  May 2018 |

It is helpful to be aware of conventions within particular disciplines, but also to remember that these conventions may reflect racism embedded in histories of the academy, and that scholars within and across different academic disciplines may not agree on definitions and conventions related to race and ethnicity. When in doubt, do some research and do not be afraid to engage in conversations about appropriate usage. When referring to a particular person or group, use the term that they prefer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigate the context of data.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empirical data is probably going to be what people are going to struggle the most with because empirical data is already academic data so why would you challenge it, question it, or not write it as it was published? But academic authors are constrained by the terms and categories they use. For instance, when researchers use census data, for the most part they’re going to refer to Asian Pacific Islanders as “Asian,” which limits our ability to actually dig into the topic and to do further research because of the limits of that umbrella category. If you’re taking information from a book or journal article, be sure to understand what lens or what framework they are using to justify using that or where that original author is coming with that intent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| —Member of the Asian and Pacific Islander Collective  
  University of Puget Sound  
  May 2018 |

Here are some additional trends to be aware of as you attempt to write towards anti-racism.

- There remains no consensus about the proper capitalization of “Black,”
especially in relation to “White.” You can ask your professors for their preferences and, as always, research the implications of each usage. It is always best to be intentional, consistent, and open-minded.

- The distinction between Native American and American Indian is also contested. American Indian includes indigenous peoples from the continental U.S., while Native American encompasses indigenous peoples from Alaska and Hawaii. As always, if a preference is expressed, respect it. If not, do some research and select a term advisedly.

- Latino/a (in other stylizations, Latin@, Latinx, which have slightly different meanings) refers to any person of Latin American descent living in America. Mexican-Americans may also identify as Chicano/a (or Xicano/a). The terms Chicano/a come from the 1960's Mexican American Civil Rights Movement and represent a more political stance on identity than Latinx (as they are example of words that were reappropriated by the people who they originally referred to in a derogatory way). Hispanic describes any person of Spanish-speaking heritage and may be offensive to people who identify as Latinx or Chicano/a because the word reinforces the history of Spanish colonialism. The meanings of these terms are debated and, as a result, not fixed.

- Consider carefully the term “minority.” Often, “minoritized” or “marginalized” is a more accurate descriptor because—in many cases—the so-called minority is not, in fact, quantitatively in the minority, even though the people being described may be marginalized or treated as inferior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write with the terms people choose for themselves.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you’re writing about a specific person or group of people, try to figure out what they call themselves. While some people identify as Latino, others identify as Afro–latino, Latinx, Chicano, Hispanic, Guatemalan, Mexican, Mexican American...the list goes on. Additionally, many indigenous people of South America do not identify with the term Latino even though from a U.S. lens we may consider them so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Member of Latinx Unidos University of Puget Sound May 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking courses in African American Studies (AFAM), Asian Studies, Hispanic Studies, Latin American Studies (LAS), and Latino/a Studies would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in the Race and Pedagogy Institute (RPI) or in programs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

6.2.5 Language towards LGBTQ+ inclusivity

LGBTQ+ spans a wide and complicated range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and diverse bodies. The acronym itself stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning and others. Even this list does not cover
the full range of identities represented by the acronym—indeed, some advocate for an extended LGBTQIA+P2S, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, and Two-Spirit. Other terms for the community of people who do not identify within the dominant forms of sexuality and gender (heterosexuality or cisgenderism) include GSM (Gender and Sexuality Minorities) or GSD (Gender and Sexuality Diverse). These last two terms, in particular, indicate that members of this community do not all identify as one particular identity at all times; many individuals within the community choose not to identify or to identify as fluid. The amorphous nature of the name portends the difficulty writers may have when referring to individuals within the community: the language of the LGBTQ+ community is ever-evolving, so it may not always be clear to you which term to use. To be as respectful and inclusive as possible, use people-first language (say “a person who is Queer” rather than “a Queer person”), and keep learning and asking questions. What follows is a list of basic terms and definitions that describe diverse genders and sexualities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms and definitions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong> is the classification of people (usually as infants) as male, female, or intersex based on biological, chromosomal, and anatomical features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender identity</strong> is the internal, personal sense that people have of their own gender, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender expression</strong> encompasses the ways in which individuals choose to express their gender based on sociocultural ideas of masculinity and femininity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cisgender</strong> refers to individuals whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender non-conforming</strong> refers to individuals whose gender does not neatly fit into the dominant notions of gender within their particular cultural context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genderqueer</strong> refers to people whose gender is outside of the male/female binary and who therefore challenge the idea that gender is a static binary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intersex</strong> refers to individuals who were born with components of both “male” and “female” sexual anatomy or chromosomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transgender</strong> is an adjective and umbrella term that describes individuals whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Many people take hormones and some undergo surgery, but neither of these medical treatments is requisite for a transgender identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is inappropriate to use transgender as a noun (e.g., a transgender) or to use the term transgendered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transsexual</strong> is an older term that is not an umbrella term and is preferred mostly by individuals who have changed (or seek to change) their bodies through medical procedures. It is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trans or trans∗ are shortened versions of “transgender” and the spectrum of identities that accompany that term. The asterisk in trans∗ represents the multitude of identities that “trans” encompasses. Be careful when using this term around audiences that may not understand exactly what it means.

Transgender woman and transgender man (also MTF and FTM) are ways some transgender individuals choose to identify themselves. MTF stands for male-to-female, and FTM stands for female-to-male. Only use these terms if the individual has indicated their preference for them, as some people choose to identify as man or woman without any modifier.

Transition refers to the period of time in someone’s life during which they make an inward and outward transition to the gender with which they identify. This period and what occurs within it differ from person to person. DO NOT use the term “sex change,” as it obscures the difference between sex and gender and does not represent all transition experiences.

6.2.6 Pronouns

A pronoun (see Subsection 7.1.4) is a word (including I, you, me, he, she, and they) that refers to a noun, when it’s unwieldy to keep referring to that noun by name. When pronouns refer to and represent people, pronouns are usually connected to gender identity, which is the internal, personal perception that one has about one’s own gender. A person may identify on either end of the gender binary (man/woman or boy/girl), or in between or outside of it. Using appropriate pronouns is as important as referring to a person by the correct name.

They As a Singular Pronoun. Using appropriate pronouns, though, is complicated because gender-neutral singular pronouns are being debated actively at the moment, and, as we discuss above, many people are now arguing that gender is not even relevant in many of the circumstances in which we once emphasized it (for instance, how often is it really important to know whether the person in a sales position is a “saleswoman” or a “salesman”?). Debate over gender and pronouns is not new; people have been proposing gender-neutral pronouns since at least the mid-nineteenth century. However, the need for adequate pronouns in English has become more pressing as trans people have become more visible and as the idea of gender identity has been discussed more openly.

People who identify as female typically use she/her pronouns, and those who identify as male usually use he/him pronouns. Individuals whose gender identity does not fit the binary sometimes use they/them pronouns, and—more generally—“they” is becoming increasingly accepted as a gender-neutral, third-person singular pronoun. In this book, we use “they” as a gender-neutral pronoun in circumstances when the gender of a person is unknown (for example, “Please ask each of the students what they would like for dessert”) or when
that person identifies as neither male nor female (for example, “Do you know my friend Ari? They are a math major”).

Pronouns are important representations of people’s gender identity. If you don’t know what pronouns someone uses, simply ask them, “What pronouns do you use?” If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun, apologize, correct yourself, and remember for next time.

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking courses in Gender and Queer Studies (GQS) would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in programs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

6.2.7 Language Toward Socioeconomic Inclusivity

Unless you’re a sociologist or economist, writing about social class can be difficult because information about non-technical, correct, and respectful language can be hard to come by. While the last few years have given rise to more conversations around race, gender, and sexuality, discussions of socioeconomic differences have been comparatively lacking. Socioeconomic status is an important topic in many social sciences and relates to a variety of identities people may hold such as being a first-generation college student, being homeless, or being rich or poor.

Although American individualism and Protestant ethic suggest that both affluence and poverty are the responsibility of the individual, the reality is that socioeconomic status is largely structural and linked to opportunities in education, employment, home ownership, and so on. As such, it is important to note that inequities in socioeconomic status are often intertwined with identities like race, gender, and sexuality. Disparities in education and employment, moreover, produce and reproduce structures of poverty and affluence.

Here’s an oversimplified example to show you what we’re talking about:

College-educated parents are likely to be able to afford to live in a neighborhood with an adequately funded, high-functioning school—or to be able to send their children to an adequately funded, high-functioning school. Their children are likely to learn and internalize language and mannerisms at home that are consistent with the language and mannerisms at school, and thus are more likely to succeed—and, if they don’t succeed initially, their parents are likely in a good position to advocate for them or to help them strategize ways to succeed.

Alternatively, parents who are not college-educated are less likely to be able to send their children to an adequately funded, high-functioning school. Their children are less likely to go to school already knowing the language and mannerisms that are expected in school, and so those children must work harder in school to learn the things that schools expect. The farther along the children go in school, the more important it is that their hard work pays off, and if they don’t succeed initially, their parents are likely not to know from experience how to advocate for them or to help them strategize ways to succeed.

While vastly unnuanced, this example demonstrates how social class embodies generations of oppression and oppressing. Statistically, people in the United States tend to end up in socioeconomic positions similar to those of their parents, so both affluence and poverty tend to be cyclical. Writing about socioeco-
nomic status or class without acknowledging inequalities in opportunities does injustice to the people that those inequalities affect. Avoiding classist language is an important step toward changing the classist ideologies that underlie and reproduce the structural inequalities that lead to economic disparity.

Although there aren’t clear guidelines to follow, we next give you a few helpful definitions and terms to avoid to get you started writing more inclusively.

**Classism** is the belief that people with high socioeconomic status are culturally superior to those with lower socioeconomic status.

**Socioeconomic status (SES)** refers to a person’s social and economic standing in relation to other individuals in the same society. It is often measured by education, occupation, and income.

Avoid classist terms such as: ghetto, white-trash, classy, thug, inner-city, and terms like “high class” and “low class” because they convey biased judgments about people within certain socioeconomic settings.

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking courses in Sociology and Anthropology (SOAN) or social psychology would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in programs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

### 6.2.8 Language Towards Religious Inclusivity

The majority of people in the world identify with a religion, and most religions span huge swaths of the globe and encompass very diverse groups of people. Additionally, religions are often interpreted and practiced very differently depending on the cultural context, and people may identify with a religion religiously, culturally and/or ethnically. All of these factors make it complicated to write about religion inclusively and without overgeneralization.

Despite this complexity, it is important to take the time to learn about the nuances of religion in order to avoid perpetuating stereotypes and spreading misinformation that contributes to religious discrimination or persecution. Both religious discrimination (the treatment of a person or group differently because of their religion) and religious persecution (the systematic mistreatment or discrimination of an individual or group because of their religion) have long and persisting histories. From the forced conversion of Native Americans to Christianity by European Americans in the late 19th century, to the murder of millions of Jewish people during the Holocaust, to modern U.S. immigration policies that disproportionately affect Muslim people, the histories of systematic religious oppression are extensive. More subtle forms of discrimination are also ongoing: at the University of Puget Sound not only has anti-Semitic graffiti been found on campus as recently as Spring of 2018, but members of the University of Puget Sound Jewish Student Union described in an interview how campus members continue to make assumptions about them, such as that they eat kosher, speak Hebrew, attend a synagogue, or are good with money, because of their Jewish identity. As writers and people, we all have a sphere of influence in which we can bring awareness about the complexity of religious identity in order to foster a culture of religious inclusivity. Writing about a religion without being informed about it can unknowingly fuel religious discrimination. Therefore, although complex, it’s vital to take the steps to learn about the nuances of religion before writing about it.
Anti-Semitism extends beyond the Holocaust.

It’s important if people are going to be writing about anti-Semitism that they don’t refer to the Holocaust as the only example, or place it in a historical vacuum and say that it doesn’t exist anymore. Generalizing and historicizing anti-Semitism is another form of anti-Semitism that erases anti-Semitic acts happening in the world right now.

—Members of the Jewish Student Union
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Avoid making broad generalizations in your writing.

Liberal writing on Islam tends to sometimes follow an imperial line such as “Muslim women need saving” or just employs a kind of rhetoric that justifies, in the end, imperial behavior and thinking. This is an example of the overt generalizations that people make. Again, bear in mind that you’re talking about a billion people, that’s an eighth of the globe. Like if you had eight people in a room one is Muslim. I don’t think any of the people at UPS really conceptualize what that means, if they’ve ever even met a Muslim person.

—Member of the Muslim Student Union
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

A common misconception about religious communities is that there is a single experience shared by everyone in the community, and that there is agreement about how the religion should be practiced or interpreted. In reality, there is a lot of disagreement within most faith communities about religious beliefs, practices, interpretations, and even about who belongs to the community. For example, as a member of the University of Puget Sound Jewish Student Union emphasizes, there is not a united stance on Israel that is shared by all Jewish people. Individuals within a religious community have experiences, beliefs, and practices as diverse as the individuals themselves. Individuals’ and groups’ religious practices are informed by their cultural context as well as their other identities (for more on how identities interact see Subsection 6.2.1). For instance, as a member of the University of Puget Sound Muslim Student Union points out, a Sunni Muslim, upper-middle class, merchant family from Damascus, Syria will likely have very different perspectives and practices than a Muslim farmer from Sinai, Egypt, despite their shared Muslim identity. For this reason, it is important not to oversimplify the experiences, beliefs and practices of individuals and religious communities. When writing about a religion, take care to be precise about what specific sects you are referencing, and don’t generalize one group or individual’s experience as representative of others just because they fall under the same umbrella religious term.
Identities are nuanced and must be written about with specificity.

Christianity is certainly a dominant identity, but that doesn’t mean that it should be written about as though it is an inherently oppressive identity. Christianity has often been used oppressively by various regimes including the U.S., but what tends to be ignored is that Christianity has also been used to work against oppression. Many of the social organizations and activist movements we know and love today began within Christianity, for example the environmentalist movement, the labor movement, and the civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 60’s began in churches. Writing about Christianity as if it was just one oppressive, dominant entity erases a lot of history and complexity. At its core, Christianity is just another human identity and should therefore be written about with nuance.

—Member of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Another intricacy about religious identity is that people don’t always identify with a religion religiously; they may also identify with it culturally and/or ethnically. For example, someone who is raised Catholic but identifies as atheist may identify as culturally Catholic. While they may not share the same religious beliefs and practices as the Catholic community they were raised in, their worldview was nevertheless shaped by growing up in a Catholic community. For instance, their familiarity with the practice of celebrating Christmas and Easter and participating in Catholic practices such as Confirmation and Lent gives them a different cultural context than would growing up, for example, in a Hindu community.

Cultural, ethnic, and religious identity.

With Judaism, you may identify with the religious aspect or the cultural aspect or more of your ethnicity, so in that sense it’s intersectional but also you can be Jewish and part of the LGBTQ community or you can be Jewish and a person of color...[And] within Judaism there’s so many different styles and approaches depending on the various different Jewish communities throughout the world. So it’s important to recognize that it’s hard to be universally representative of Judaism, per se.

—Members of the Jewish Student Union
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Each of our fundamental worldviews are as intricate as the various identities, experiences, relationships, and cultural contexts that shape them. Because of this, making comparisons between a worldview you hold and that of a religion you are learning about, although comfortable, may be wildly misleading. A member of the University of Puget Sound Muslim Student Union gives
the example of equating Sunnis and Shiites with Catholics and Protestants, the Mosque with the Church, and Muslim forms of prayer with Christian forms. In these cases, although someone who is religiously or culturally Christian may think it is helpful to compare what they are learning about Islam to what they know about Christianity, such associations impose a Christian worldview onto Islam, prohibiting the Christian from accurately understanding these aspects of Islam. Making false equivalencies frequently leads people to make inaccurate interpretations and assumptions about religions. In order to avoid making false equivalencies, be wary of making direct comparisons between your religious perspective and that of one you are less familiar with, and be aware that your worldview may inhibit you from interpreting a religious text, practice, or belief in the same way someone with a different worldview would. Also, when learning about a religion, read sources that are written by people who identify with that religion, rather than texts exclusively by people interpreting it through different religious perspectives.

Seek sources by people with the identities you are writing about.

If [students] are reading about Islam, [they should be reading the work of] Muslim scholars. ...people always want to go to a Western, quote unquote objective source, or somebody that’s white or that’s an atheist or an ex-Muslim, without realizing the power dynamics of why somebody who’s ex-Muslim would be published [over] somebody who’s Muslim.... Recognize that you have to actively seek sources other than what’s presented to you.

—Member of the Muslim Student Union
University of Puget Sound
May 2018

Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking courses in Religious Studies would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in programs and clubs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).

6.3 Writing and Correctness

At the beginning of this chapter, we note that language use is part of the work of equity and inclusion. One way we advance equity is by supporting linguistic diversity on our campus. Linguistic diversity refers to the many varieties of English that people use to communicate and which are intimately connected to writers’ and speakers’ identities. Members of the Puget Sound community come from multiple geographic locations and cultures that use a variety of linguistic structures to communicate ideas. These structures may overlap in some ways and diverge in others. These structures also overlap and diverge from specific varieties of English that are used in academic settings. By supporting linguistic diversity, we acknowledge the expansive nature of language, we avoid reproducing inequities inherent in a linguistic monoculture, and we encourage the inclusion of minoritized voices in academic discourse on our campus.
Standard American English. Standard American English (SAE) (also called Academic English, or AE; Mainstream American English, or MAE; and Standard Edited American English, or SEAE) is a variety of English that is held in high esteem. SAE exists primarily as a written form of English and is the form of English that is usually used on campus in our written papers, speeches, lectures, and presentations. Of course, the notion that SAE is “standard” is contested: On the one hand, because language changes constantly, there is no one moment in time when all users of SAE can agree completely on what the standard is; on the other, SAE is not truly “American” in that it is not the language of all Americans and has often been used to normalize white, middle- and upper-class language systems and to denigrate language systems that differ from them (and that hence, become “non-standard” and “improper”). And even within the basic category of SAE, there are more specific conventions regarding language that distinguish a science class, for example, from a class in humanities.

If we support linguistic diversity, we accept that language is not static, that we will encounter words and expressions that come from a variety of disciplines and cultural communities. Merriam Webster defines language as the methods of combining words as understood by a community. By contrast, a dialect is defined as a regional variety of a language. While scholars acknowledge distinctions between a language and dialect, the line between the two is not always clear or without problems. One flippant way of explaining the difference between a dialect and a language is that “a language is a dialect with an army and a navy”; in his essay “What’s a Language, Anyway?” linguist John McWhorter elaborates, arguing that there is no objective difference between a language and dialect, that the realities of speech are more complicated than these definitions allow.

We can better understand the status of SAE and the role of linguistic diversity in advancing equity and inclusion by considering the history of African American English (AAE), a variety of English spoken by some African Americans. AAE has been researched and written about extensively, more than other varieties of English, and two respected scholars of AAE are John Rickford of Stanford University and Geneva Smitherman of Michigan State University. Like most spoken languages, AAE is rule–governed and systematic, although the system is too complicated and vast to summarize here. Today, AAE is accepted as a variety of English, but it was rejected as a language in the past and it has been and continues to be maligned using racist ideas about black speech and intelligence. Two highly politicized cases about the use of AAE in public schools are Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School Children v. Ann Arbor School District Board from 1979 and Oakland Unified School District’s 1996 resolution to use AAE. In both cases, the use of AAE by educators as a way to affirm the validity of AAE and to help students learn SAE was considered controversial. It is helpful to know this history when considering AAE in academic contexts.

In addition to SAE, other rule–governed varieties of American English include Chicano English (also called Mexican American English), Cajun English, Hawaiian Pidgin (also called Hawaiian Pidgin English and Hawaiian Creole English), and Southern White American English. These varieties of English not only have some different vocabulary than SAE but also—and more importantly—have some different grammatical rules than SAE. American Sign Language (ASL), too, has a different grammatical structure than written SAE.

As you attempt to write with awareness and engage equitably with linguistic diversity, here are questions to ask yourself:

- Do I assume the English that I speak and write is the only way to com-
• Do I use the terms “correct English” or “standard English” or “proper English”? If so, do I accept the value judgments inherent in these terms?

• What assumptions do I make about a writer or speaker based on the English that they use?

• What are words that I use in my writing and speech that may be markers of my culture?

• What are words specific to my academic discipline that may not be understood outside that discipline?

• What are writing conventions specific to my academic discipline?

Because the rules regarding language construction and use are complex, this section is intended as a general guideline for how to approach linguistic diversity. If you want in-depth information on sociolinguistics, or what constitutes a vernacular, dialect, or language, here is a short list of recommended reading about linguistic diversity:


There are also excellent resources on these topics here on campus. Please consider this section as a starting point rather than a comprehensive guide, and please continue to grow your awareness in your life and education outside this book! Taking an English course on the history of English, or courses in African American Studies (AFAM), Asian Studies, Hispanic Studies, Latin American Studies (LAS), and Latino/a Studies would be a good way to continue learning, as would getting involved in the Race and Pedagogy Institute (RPI) or in programs through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE).
Chapter 7

Writing at the Sentence Level

Although some people are willing to express their undying love for grammar via sonnet, most people find sentence-level mechanics daunting, overwhelming, confusing, and sometimes (gasp!) boring. Just the sight of sentence diagrams sends some people straight back to their seventh-grade English class and provokes tears of frustration. There are multitudes of components, hordes of definitions, and seemingly endless numbers of terms. How can anyone keep them all straight?!

Fear not. The good news is that you’ve had a miraculous understanding of English grammar (or the grammar of whatever your first language may be) since the time you learned to ask for more Cheerios. Your babbles as a baby, simple sentences as a toddler, and recent rap battles with friends have all prepared you to understand, work with, and manipulate language in complicated and ingenious ways. You’re already so cool!

7.1 Grammar Basics

The purpose of this section is to help elucidate why you can understand the sentence you’re currently reading (What parts does it contain? What do those parts mean?). We hope to lay out completely yet concisely all of the sentence-level basics with which you should be familiar. Let’s get started (don’t worry—we’ll ease into it)!

7.1.1 Parts of Speech

Each word in a sentence belongs to a part of speech. There are eight parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Words can belong to multiple parts of speech, depending on how they’re being used. By being able to identify the part of speech a word falls into, you can better understand the underlying forms and meanings of a sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Here are the eight parts of speech and some examples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noun</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples: book, cat, dog, I, me, Puget Sound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verb action word
   Examples: agonize, do, jump, run, swim

Adjective describes a noun
   Examples: cold, green, rainy, windy

Adverb describes a verb (often ends in -ly)
   Examples: beautifully, fast, quickly, slowly

Pronoun replaces a noun
   Examples: he, his, her, it, she, they, theirs

Preposition describes timing or placement of a noun or pronoun
   Examples: about, at, beside, by, during, for, instead of

Conjunction connects phrases and clauses
   Coordinating conjunction coordinates two ideas that are emphasized equally in the sentence
   Examples: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

   Fun Fact. If you want to remember all the coordinating conjunctions, you just need to remember the acronym FANBOYS (Get it? For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So).

   Subordinating conjunction subordinates one idea or clause to another idea or clause
   Examples: after, although, because, since, than, whether, while

Interjection an exclamation that shows the writer’s emotions
   Examples: Ah!, crap, duh, huh?, no!, wow
7.1.2 Basic Sentence Structure

7.1.2.1 Subject-Predicate

In Standard American English (SAE), a basic sentence is composed of two parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject of a sentence is the person or entity that does an action or is the main focus of the sentence. The subject may be a noun, proper noun, personal pronoun, noun phrase, or different nouns linked by a conjunction. The predicate is the action or description of the subject. Predicates may be verbs, verbs accompanied by helping verbs, or an entire verb phrase. For instance, in the sentence “The first-year student waited in line for the Farm-to-Table special,” the noun phrase “the first-year student” would be the subject and “waited in line for the Farm-to-Table special” would be the predicate. An easy way to distinguish the subject and predicate of a sentence is to 1) ask yourself what is “being done” (predicate), and then 2) ask yourself “what” is doing that action (subject).

Below you can find a few example sentences showing the subject and predicate (the subject is italicized and the predicate is in regular typeface):

- Ollie studied in Diversions.
- The IPE professor told the class to turn the assignment in on Moodle.
- The a capella group “What She Said” will perform at the spring concert.

7.1.2.2 Direct and Indirect Objects

A complete sentence always has a subject and a predicate (see Subsubsection 7.1.2.1). A predicate can include both direct and indirect objects.

A direct object is the noun on which the action occurs. In the sentence, “You bought a present,” “the present” is the direct object because it is the noun on which the action “bought” occurs.

An indirect object is the secondary object, or the object secondarily affected by the action, which is to say that a sentence can only have an indirect object...
if it also has a direct object. An indirect object is either explicitly or implicitly prepositional. In the sentence, “You bought a present for me,” “me” is the indirect object because it is the recipient of the object originally acted on. In this case, it is marked by the preposition “for.” The sentence could also be constructed “You bought me a present.” Here, the direct and indirect objects are the same, only the indirect object is not indicated by the preposition “for.”

An easy way to identify the direct and indirect object of a sentence is to ask yourself: On what is the action occurring? (This is the direct object.) And what is being affected by the action having already occurred on something else? (This is the indirect object.)

7.1.2.3 Clauses

What do clauses and amino acids have in common? They’re both essential building blocks! Just as amino acids make life possible, clauses make sentences possible. As you read in the previous section, every clause is composed of a subject and a predicate, which also means that every clause has a noun and a verb. Unfortunately, like many things in English, there are far too many terms that make it difficult to keep the concepts straight.

Recall. The subject is the thing or person a sentence is about. The predicate is the part of a sentence that modifies (i.e., tells you what’s going on with) the subject. The predicate also contains a verb and sometimes a direct or an indirect object or different kinds of phrases.

Independent/Main. An independent clause, also called a main clause, has a subject and a verb and conveys a complete thought.

Subordinate/Dependent. The primary feature of subordinate/dependent clauses is that they cannot stand alone because they do not form a complete thought. Subordinate/dependent clauses are dependent on an independent clause to make sense.
Example 7.1.1 I will wear my raincoat today because it is raining outside.
- “I will wear my raincoat today” = a complete sentence
- “because it is raining outside.” = an incomplete sentence

Example 7.1.2 If you want to be an RA, you should attend the upcoming res life info session.
- “If you want to be an RA” = incomplete
- “you should attend the upcoming res life info session.” = complete

Example 7.1.3 I can go hiking this weekend as long as I finish my homework by Friday.
- “I can go hiking this weekend” = complete
- “as long as I finish my homework by Friday.” = incomplete

**Clauses.**
- Begin with subordinating conjunctions.
- There are three types of dependent clauses: adjective, adverb, and noun clauses. Each of these types of clauses is named after a part of speech because, when used in dependent-clause form, these groups of words act as a single part of speech—that’s why they’re called dependent.

**Adjective/Relative Clauses.**
- Act as adjectives to modify a noun (the subject)
- Begin with a relative pronoun or a relative adverb (that, who, which, whose, whom, when, why, where)
- Answers the question(s): Which one? How many? What kind?

Example 7.1.4 “The Grizz costume, which belongs to the school, is to be used only at official school events.”
- Subject = the Grizz costume
- Question = which one?
- Answer = the one that belongs to the school

Example 7.1.5 “The two chocolate labs that walk around campus are so cute.”
- Subject = the two chocolate labs
Adverb Clauses.
- Act as adverbs to modify the verb in a sentence
- Begin with a subordinating conjunction (although, because, after, until, etc.)
- Answers the question(s): How? When? Why? Where?

Example 7.1.6 “I ran around the track until I couldn’t run any more.”
- Verb phrase: ran around the track
- Question: How?
- Answer = until I couldn’t run any more

Example 7.1.7 “He bought fifty bottles of Powerade at the end of the semester because he had leftover Dining Dollars.”
- Verb phrase: bought fifty bottles of Powerade
- Question: Why? (Great question!)
- Answer: because he had leftover Dining Dollars

Noun Clauses.
- Act as nouns
- Begin with who, whom, which, that, when, how, why, and whatever, whoever, whenever, wherever, etc.
- Answers the question(s): What? Who?

Example 7.1.8 “ Whoever gave me that cookie is the best!”
- Question: Who is the best?
- Answer: Whoever gave me that cookie

Example 7.1.9 “Do you know why the sky is blue?”
- Question: What do you want to know?
- Answer: Why the sky is blue
7.1.2.4 Phrases

Phrases are to sentences what landscaping is to Puget Sound. Just as Puget Sound’s landscaping makes the campus beautiful, interesting, and informative, so too do phrases add beauty, interest, and information to sentences. Like clauses and almost everything else grammar related, though, there are far too many phrases with overly confusing names. To remember and understand each type of phrase, it might be helpful for you to review the parts of speech. Since phrases function as single parts of speech, you can figure out which type of phrase a particular phrase is by identifying its role in a sentence.

Whereas a clause has both a noun and a verb, a phrase has either a noun or a verb, but not both. Phrases are groups of words that function as a single part of speech (e.g., a noun or an adjective).

The most common types of phrases.

**Infinitive phrases** Infinitive phrases feature our good friend, the infinitive verb.

“To include all types of phrases in this list would be too boring.”

“To pull an all-nighter, I need to stop by Diversions to get my usual: a nitro cold brew with a shot of espresso.”

**Prepositional phrases** Remember that a preposition tells you the timing or placement of a noun. A prepositional phrase, then, is a phrase that tells you about the timing or placement of another part of the sentence. Prepositional phrases function as either adjectives (to modify a noun, as in “The cat on the bed”) or as adverbs (to modify a verb as in “The cat jumped off the bed”).

“That cat is under the table.”

“As I walked along dark campus pathways, I was glad that I had called a security escort.”

**Noun phrases** A noun phrase acts as (gasp) a noun! Noun phrases include nouns and modifiers (e.g., adjectives).

“My spunky roommate listens to the best music.”

“I’m always brought so much joy when I see that perfect, beautiful, wonderful little puppy dog prancing around campus.”

**Participial phrases** You’ll frequently run across phrases that contain present or past participles. Present participles usually end in -ing (“I am running, jumping, swimming, and talking”), and past participles end in -ed or take an irregular form (“I ran, jumped, swam, and talked”).

“I like my eggs from the sub covered in ketchup.”

“The student ran to catch up with her friends, slipping in the puddles along Commencement Walk.”
**Gerund phrases** A gerund is a verb that ends in “-ing” and acts as a noun. Examples of gerunds include: studying, reading, working, crying, whining, whimpering, and napping. Just like these words, a gerund phrase adds some spice (i.e., -ing) to a sentence.

> “Crying while studying is not recommended.”
> “Although it may seem like a good idea, having pizza from The Cellar for every meal probably isn’t the way to go.”

### 7.1.2.5 Modifiers

**Modifiers.** are words, phrases, or clauses that characterize a noun and are typically used to add description or specificity to a sentence. You can identify the modifier in a sentence by asking yourself which or what kind of noun the sentence is highlighting. For example, in the sentence “The students gazed in awe at the towering sequoia tree,” the word “towering” is being used to modify or describe the sequoia tree. Therefore, to identify the modifier, you can ask yourself “Which sequoia tree?” and answer “The towering one.”

**Participle phrases.** can also act as modifiers. For instance, in the sentence “Gazing at the towering sequoia tree, the students were in awe,” the phrase “gazing at the towering sequoia tree” is the modifier describing the students. You can play the same game as before: “Which students were in awe?” “The ones gazing at the towering sequoia tree.”

**Adjective clauses.** can act as another type of modifier. In the sentence “The sequoia tree, which was towering over the students, inspired widespread awe,” the clause “which was towering over the students” is the modifier describing the sequoia tree. Again: “What kind of sequoia tree?” “The one towering over the students.”

### 7.1.2.6 Types of Sentences

Sentence structure is important to keep in mind while you’re writing because strong writing typically employs sentences of varied type and length. Writers can also strategically use certain sentence structures to convey meaning to a reader beyond the meaning of the words alone. If you realize that you mostly utilize one or two sentence types, try mixing up your sentence structures a bit more!

**Recall.** Independent clause = a subject + a verb = a complete thought
- Dependent/subordinate clause = a subject + a verb + something else = thought that cannot stand alone and make sense
- Coordinating conjunction = FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
CHAPTER 7. WRITING AT THE SENTENCE LEVEL

Simple one independent clause

Examples:

- “I love Puget Sound.”
- “My RCC is so cool.”
- “Puget Sound is in Washington.”

Compound at least two independent clauses connected via a coordinating conjunction

Examples:

- “I miss my high school friends, but I’m excited to make new friends.”
- “Ubiquitous They is so funny, and I really like watching them perform every Friday night.”
- “I always need coffee when I study in Thompson, so I’m grateful that Oppenheimer Cafe is right there.”

Complex independent clause and one or more dependent/subordinate clauses

Examples:

- “When the sub runs out of hummus, I want to cry.”
- “If you feel unsafe walking back to campus alone, Security Services provides a free escort service.”
- “I need to drink coffee when I’m tired.”

Note. When the dependent clause goes in front of the independent clause, we separate the two clauses with a comma. When the dependent clause goes second, though, we do not use a comma.

Compound-Complex two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent/subordinate clause

Examples:

- “Independent clauses are really cool, but sometimes they get too long when you add too much information.”

7.1.2.7 Functional Types of Sentences

Declarative. Declarative sentences make statements. You will use primarily declarative sentences in your academic writing.

This sentence is a declarative sentence.

My favorite club is Yoga Club.

Interrogative. Interrogative sentences interrogate—that is, they ask questions and end with question marks.

Don’t you think that “interrogative” is a funny word?

Why are we talking about question marks?

Imperative. Imperative sentences do what we all love to do; they give people directions and tell them what to do.
Go tell him that it’s imperative that he knows what an imperative sentence is.

Grab me a Greek yogurt from the sub, please.

**Exclamatory.** Exclamatory sentences exclaim things! They are so exciting!

- I love Puget Sound!
- I love writing!

### 7.1.2.8 Subordination and Coordination

Because both clauses in a compound sentence are independent, neither one is obviously backgrounded in relation to the other (as in a complex sentence). That’s because the relation between the clauses of a compound sentence is only conveyed lexically (through the coordinating conjunction), as opposed to lexically and syntactically (in a complex sentence). Nonetheless, a compound sentence can serve various purposes. A compound sentence that conjoins clauses using “and” can provide extra information (“I want to go to the park and I want to search for Pokemon”). A compound sentence that conjoins clauses using “or” or “nor” can provide alternatives (“I want to go to the park or I want to stay home and play Pokemon”). A compound sentence that conjoins clauses using “so” or “for” can provide justification (“I want to go to the park so I can search for Pokemon; I want to go to the park for I love to search for Pokemon”).

As its name implies, a subordinate clause must always be subordinated to the independent clause in a complex sentence. The effect of this subordination is the backgrounding of the subordinate clause and the foregrounding of the independent clause. In the example “When the sub runs out of hummus, I want to cry,” the subordinate clause “When the sub runs out of hummus” is backgrounded in relation to the independent clause “I want to cry.” This relativization places different emphasis on the clauses. The independent clause “I want to cry” is more important than the subordinate clause “When the sub runs out of hummus” because it conveys a complete thought, while the subordinate clause only modifies that thought. As the backgrounded clause, the subordinate clause specifies the context (provides the background) of the independent clause. The picture would be coherent without the background, but not nearly as robust. When constructing a complex sentence, then, consider what the most important part of that sentence is and foreground it.

**Note.** Compound sentences are easily transformed into complex sentences. For instance, the example “I miss my high school friends, but I’m excited to make new friends.” could be reconstructed to read “Although I miss my high school friends, I’m excited to make new friends.” Consider what meaning you want to convey in your sentence and construct accordingly.

### 7.1.3 Infinitives

**Infinitives** are verb forms composed of two words, such as “to write” or “to understand.” For instance, “I like to write sentences using infinitives” and “To understand infinitives, one should learn when to use them,” are examples of the infinitive verb form.

But say you wanted to make these sentences a bit more descriptive. You can do this by adding an adverb or adverbial phrase to the verb forms, such as
“clearly write” or “fully understand.” This may result in “splitting the infinitive,” where adverbs or adverbial phrases are inserted between the “to” and the root verb that follows, as in “to clearly write” or “to fully understand.” Split infinitives are hotly contested in the grammar world. Some grammarians argue we should always avoid splitting our infinitives while others assert splitting the infinitive isn’t a hard rule and can be done if it preserves thought and sentence fluency. Therefore, it’s hard to know when to avoid splitting an infinitive and when it’s all right to leave it as is. Below are a few guidelines to help you decide whether or not to split your infinitives (infinitive verb forms are underlined, adverbs are italicized).

7.1.3.1 When to split infinitives

Sometimes the sentence meaning is clearer when the adverb modifying the verb stays within the verb form. For instance, consider the sentences below:

“I like to clearly write sentences using infinitives.”

“To fully understand infinitives, one should learn when to use them.”

Both of these sentences have split infinitives (“to clearly write” and “to fully understand”). However, if we move the adverbs outside of the verb form, suddenly the sentences become less clear and more awkward:

“I like to write sentences clearly using infinitives.”

In this sentence, it is not clear whether “clearly” is modifying “to write” or “using infinitives”; does the person like to clearly write or clearly use infinitives? In this case, it might be better to leave the modifying adverb within the verb form.

“To understand infinitives fully, one should learn when to use them.”

In this sentence, the modifying adverb “fully” is placed outside of the verb form “to understand.” While this placement does not interfere with the meaning or fluency of the sentence, it breaks up the logical unit of thought; one must refer back to the intact verb form “to understand” in order to identify what “fully” is modifying. Therefore, it might be better to split the infinitive so the reader has a clearer idea of what kind of understanding the sentence is promising (full understanding).

Below are some more examples of infinitives that are probably okay to leave split:

Clear “In order to properly plan for a Puget Sound Outdoors trip, you must sign up at The Expeditionary.” [infinitive “to plan” is split]
Confusing “In order properly to plan for a Puget Sound Outdoors trip, you must sign up at The Expeditionary.” [infinitive is intact, but sentence is just plain awkward]

“In order to plan for a Puget Sound Outdoors trip properly, you must sign up at The Expeditionary.” [infinitive is intact and the sentence is acceptable, but the modifier “properly” is somewhat removed from the verb form “to plan”]

Clear “By drinking more tea, I plan to gradually lessen my coffee dependence.” [infinitive “to lessen” is split]

Confusing “By drinking more tea, I gradually plan to lessen my coffee dependence.” [infinitive intact, but modifier “gradually” could be referring to “plan” or “lessen”]

“By drinking more tea, I plan to lessen gradually my coffee dependence.” [infinitive intact, but sentence is awkward]

“By drinking more tea, I plan to lessen my coffee dependence gradually.” [infinitive intact and sentence is acceptable, but modifier “gradually” is somewhat removed from the verb form “to lessen”]

Clear “If you’d like to actively involve yourself in social justice opportunities on campus, you can visit the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement.” [infinitive “to involve” is split]

Confusing “If you’d like actively to involve yourself in social justice opportunities on campus, you can visit the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement.” [infinitive intact, but sentence is awkward]

“If you’d like to involve yourself in social justice opportunities on campus actively, you can visit the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement.” [infinitive intact, but modifier “actively” far removed from the verb form “to involve”]

Note. Though there are instances when it would be practical to split the infinitive, you need not always use an adverb. Cutting adverbs, especially when they result in split infinitives, often makes writing cleaner and more fluid.

7.1.3.2 When to avoid splitting infinitives

While splitting the infinitive is sometimes necessary to preserve sentence fluency and thought coherency, it is usually better to avoid splitting them when you can. Infinitives are single units of thought, so keeping them intact often improves the reader’s understanding of the sentence. Additionally, splitting the infinitive can actually make the sentence more awkward. For instance, take the following sentences where the infinitives are intact:

“You should try to keep infinitives intact whenever possible.”
“I would like to write sentences with infinitives clearly and concisely.”

Both of these sentences keep the infinitive intact (“to keep” and “to write”). But say you tried to split the infinitives:

“You should try to whenever possible keep infinitives intact.”
In this sentence, inserting the modifier “whenever possible” between the verb form makes the sentence awkward and unwieldy. In this case, keeping the infinitive “to keep” intact makes the sentence more readable and clear.

“I would like to clearly and concisely write sentences with infinitives.”

Similarly, the infinitive verb form “to write” in this sentence is split by the modifying phrase “clearly and concisely.” In this case, splitting the infinitive with the modifier disrupts sentence fluency and expression of the verb form “to write”; therefore, it’s probably better to keep the infinitive phrase intact.

Clear “Before the hiking trip, the PSO members had to check their gear carefully and thoroughly.” [infinitive intact]

Confusing “Before the hiking trip, the PSO members had to carefully and thoroughly check their gear.” [infinitive “to check” is split by the modifier “carefully and thoroughly,” which makes the sentence awkward]

Clear “LogJam! is a great place to look for clubs and activities at your own pace.” [infinitive intact]

Confusing “LogJam! is a great place to at your own pace look for clubs and activities.” [infinitive “to look” split by the modifier “at your own pace,” which makes the sentence awkward and unreadable]

7.1.4 Pronouns

7.1.4.1 Indefinite Pronouns

Many indefinite pronouns (e.g., anyone, everyone, everybody, someone, no one, nobody) are singular and should be accompanied by a singular verb (-s ending or “is”/“has”).

Example 7.1.10 “Is anyone going to Luau this year? I’ve heard everyone always has a great time.”

Example 7.1.11 “Someone is rollerblading around campus.”

Example 7.1.12 “Nobody knows the answer to the math question.”

7.1.4.2 Each, All, Some, None

“Each” is a singular pronoun and requires a singular verb. Therefore, even if the subject of the sentence is plural, “each” refers to every single member of that group and should be treated as a singular pronoun.

Example 7.1.13 “Each of the research students has access to the lab.”

Example 7.1.14 “Each and every one of you is in for a new experience here at Puget Sound.”

Example 7.1.15 “Each of the coffee flavors at the Opp sounds enticing.”

“All,” “some,” and “none” can be either singular or plural depending on the subject. “All” and “some” are singular or plural depending on the plurality of the subject and therefore require an accompanying verb.

Example 7.1.16 “All of the grass on campus is green.”
Example 7.1.17 “Some of the professors are holding class outside because it is so sunny.”

“None” can be either plural or singular depending on how many of some item it is referring to. For instance, if “none” is referring to a single item (“not one of these things”), a singular verb is required. However, if it is being applied to several items (“not any of these things”), a plural verb should be used.

Example 7.1.18 “So far, none of the rats in the psychology rat lab have escaped.” (if you are talking about many rats that have not escaped) □

Example 7.1.19 “So far, none of the rats in the psychology rat lab has escaped.” (if you are talking about one rat that has not escaped among many rats) □

Example 7.1.20 “None of the O-chem students are sleeping the night before their final.” □

7.2 Tricky Grammar

7.2.1 Challenges with Subject-Verb Agreement

As we have seen, subjects and verbs (predicates) are the primary components of any sentence. Therefore, it is important that they “agree,” or match each other in terms of plurality. In other words, single subjects require singular verbs, and plural subjects require plural verbs. For instance, in "Amanda jogs to the field house." but rather “Amanda jogs to the field house.” Similarly, if the subject is plural, you would change the verb accordingly: “The soccer players is tired” would become “The soccer players are tired.” Use the following guidelines to help you figure out if the subject and verb of your sentence “agree.”

7.2.1.1 Problems with subject-verb agreement

Any student of a foreign language knows that consistent subject and verb agreement can be a pain. Even in a first language, writers and speakers alike can confuse whether a word is singular or plural (a group?—hint: it’s singular), or—in the middle of complex sentences—forget whether the subject of their sentence was singular or plural. Thankfully, we have the opportunity to revise when we write!

Here are a few rules to help guide you through tricky sentences.
• When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns/pronouns connected by “and,” use a plural verb:

“President Crawford and professors meet with students frequently.”

• When the subject of a sentence is composed of two or more nouns/pronouns connected by “or” or “nor,” the verb corresponds with the noun or pronoun closest to it:

“Either President Crawford or professors meet with students frequently.”
“Either professors or President Crawford meets with students frequently.”

• When the subject of a sentence is a collective noun (group, jury, band, etc.) or a title (of a book, play, country, etc.), the verb will always be singular.

“I hope that band plays at LogJam! again.”
“The newest edition of Crosscurrents is great.”

• When a phrase sits in between the subject and the verb, be sure that your verb agrees with your subject, not with the phrase.

“The number of on-campus trees grows each year.”
“The Passages leader, alongside all of their passagees, was excited to reach the end of the trail.”

There are also some English words, especially in the sciences, that have tricky plural forms, so you might not even realize that the word you’re using is actually plural. One great example is the word *data*, which is plural (“The data suggest that…”).

Other examples include criteria/criterion, media/medium, and phenomena/phenomenon.

**Note.** What may seem like problems with subject-verb agreement might actually be *correct* subject-verb agreement in another variety of English.

### 7.2.1.2 Lack of agreement between pronoun and antecedent, especially the use of “they” as a singular pronoun

Problems with agreement occur most commonly when a writer mentions a subject, a movie director, for example, and then uses a pronoun (recall: he, she, they, it) to refer back to that subject. When the subject’s gender is unspecified, it is unclear whether the subject (in this case, the director) should be referred to as “he” or “she.” Because the plural pronoun “they” is gender-neutral, many writers, consciously or not, opt to use “they” instead of “he,” “she,” or the more cumbersome phrase “he or she.” (see *Basic Sentence Structure*)

A sentence using “they” but referring to a singular pronoun looks like this:

“I liked what the director of the movie did. They did a good job.”
In terms of grammatical correctness, formal, standard English requires writers to make the correct agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent (i.e., you have to use singular pronouns for singular antecedents). For a gender-unspecified singular antecedent, then, a writer has a few options: to use the phrase “he or she,” to make the subject plural if possible, or to avoid the issue altogether by restructuring the sentence. A sentence of this sort would therefore take one of these three forms:

1. “I liked what the director of the movie did. He or she did a good job.”

2. “That movie had a good director. When directors pay special attention to lighting like this director did, they are doing a good job.”

3. “That movie was great! I can’t believe how well the director focused on light!”

You are living through an important and interesting time in the progression of the English language. “Formal” and “standard” English (among most other languages) has historically belonged to people in power, people who have used (and still use) language to discriminate against and subjugate individuals who speak non-standard forms of English. In spite of this subjugation, speakers of English—standard and non-standard—are beginning to gain power and to reclaim English from those who use it to oppress. Since language and power are intimately intertwined, shifts in power inevitably lead to subsequent shifts in language. These shifts explain why it is now inappropriate to use “he” as the default pronoun and why “they” is becoming increasingly accepted as a gender-neutral, third-person singular pronoun. While conservative grammarians may lament the devolution of “proper English,” the reality is that language belongs to its speakers, not to those in power. By acknowledging these shifts in language (and the reasons behind them) within academia, we work toward increasing the access to and inclusivity of the academy. What inevitably follows are new perspectives, experiences, and identities that may lead to even greater equity among scholars and the types of knowledge they produce.

### 7.2.1.3 S Endings

In SAE, third-person singular subjects (e.g., she, he, it, proper pronoun) require an “s” at the end of their accompanying present-tense verb. Plural subjects (e.g., they, people), however, do not require an “s.” Even though “they” may refer to a single individual (see They As a Singular Pronoun), it still technically adheres to the rules of plurality. Therefore, even when describing a single person, you would pluralize the accompanying verb (“they sit” rather than “they sits”).

- “It sits, she sits, he sits, they sit…”
- “The first-year seminar student studies in the library.”
- “The RDG members dance across the stage.”
- “I’m going to Metropolitan Market with my friend, Keegan. They promise to split a Cookie with me.”

### 7.2.1.4 Is/Are

Third-person singular subjects require the present-tense verb “is,” while plural subjects require the present-tense verb “are.”

As above, even though “they” may refer to a single individual (see They
As a Singular Pronoun, it still technically adheres to the rules of plurality. Therefore, even when describing a single person, you would pluralize the accompanying verb (“they are” rather than “they is”).

- “It is, she is, he is, they are…”
- “6th Avenue is a cool place to explore.”
- “The students are going to the open-mic night in the piano lounge.”
- “The resident is running for Residence Hall Association president of their hall; they are a strong candidate for the position.”

7.2.1.5 Either/Or, Neither/Nor

If “either” and “neither” are being used to differentiate a singular item or a singular item among several, they are singular pronouns and need a singular verb.

- “Would you prefer a drip coffee or caffeinated tea?” “Either is fine with me.”
- “Neither of the two coffee machines in Diversions is working.”

If “either” and “neither” are being used in interrogative statements, they can use a plural verb.

- “Are either of you going to the women’s lacrosse game?”
- “Have neither of my books arrived from ILLiad, yet?”

If “either” and “neither” are referring to either one item or another item (two items separated by the conjunction “or” or “nor”), the verb is determined by the plurality of the item that lies closest to it. A good rule of thumb is to look at the plurality of the subject/noun closest to the verb and change the verb accordingly. However, even if a sentence is grammatically correct, you may have to fiddle with the order of the items in order to make the sentence sound more clear. For instance, take the following example:

- “Neither my teammates nor my coach was expecting it to rain during practice.”

While grammatically correct, this sentence still sounds slightly awkward. Consider a possible revision of the item order below.

- “Neither my coach nor my teammates were expecting it to rain during practice.” (Sounds much better.)

Below are some more examples of using “either/or” and “neither/nor.”

- “Either the geology team or the physics team is going to win the science basketball tournament in the Thompson courtyard.”
- “Neither the tables nor the couches in Diversions are open.”

7.2.1.6 Of

When using a phrase beginning with “of” to modify a subject, the subject always comes before the phrase. Therefore, the verb should agree with the subject before the word “of.”

- “The murder of crows targets the dropped french fry.”
- “The Office of Admission is a great place to work if you’d like to be a campus visit guide.”
7.2.1.7 And/Or

When using “and” in a sentence to combine two or more subjects, use a plural verb. When using “or” in a sentence to differentiate between two or more subjects, the verb should agree with the plurality of whatever subject is closest to it.

- “Education, occupational therapy, and physical therapy are the three graduate degrees offered at Puget Sound.”
- “My sister or my brothers are coming to visit me on campus.”
- “My brothers or my sister is coming to visit me on campus.”

7.2.1.8 Confusing Modifiers

Sometimes the subject and verb are separated by modifying phrases and adjectives that describe the subject. While modifiers are useful for adding specificity to sentences, they can be confusing when you are trying to make your subject and verb agree. If you spot a modifier, skip over it and make your verb singular or plural based on the subject. In the following examples, subjects are underlined and verbs are italicised.

- “President Crawford, along with the first-year students, is attending Convocation.”
- “The first-year resident, who was feeling FOMO and who chose to hang out with friends and watch movies instead of study for his test, now regrets the decision after seeing his test score.”
- “Diversions Cafe (and its baristas) provides a great space to study and socialize.”

Weird nouns that are singular but sound plural:
- Require plural verbs (pants, glasses, trousers)
- Require singular verbs (news, measles, lens)

7.2.1.9 Collective Nouns

There are some subjects that may be singular or plural depending on how you use them.

In order to determine whether to use a singular or a plural verb, ask yourself: Are the people in the group acting as a single unit, or is each individual in the group acting individually? If the group is acting as a single unit, use singular. If each individual in the group is acting individually, use plural. (To help with the plural instances, try seeing if it would make sense to write “___ members,” like “jury members” or “council members.”)

A list of these collective nouns and example uses may be found below.
class “The calculus class is silent during the test.”
   “After the test, the class buy their celebratory smoothies at Diversions.”

jury “The jury was late to the trial.”
   “The jury appear to be bored or sleeping during the trial; they keep yawning and nodding off.”

team “The Puget Sound women’s soccer team has had a very successful season.”
   “This year, the women’s soccer team are going home to visit their families after their NCAA win.”

army “The army trains thoroughly.”
   “The army return home after the war.”

council “The council votes in favor of the bill.”
   “The council disagree about which way to vote.”

family “My family is the best.”
   “My family are funny.”

group “The group always leaves the room a mess.”
   “The group sing, dance, and act.”

audience “The audience applauds.”
   “The audience were hooting and hollering.”

board “The Board of Trustees is willing to hear students about fossil fuel divestment.”
   “The Board of Trustees have different opinions about divestment.”

crowd “And the crowd goes wild!”
   “The crowd are running, jumping, and yelling.”

7.2.1.10 Fractional Expressions

(half/part/some/a majority/all/any/more/most of)
Fractional expressions can agree with either plural or singular verbs. Pick the type of verb based on the meaning and context of the fractional expression. Here are some examples:

Plural “Some of us are ready to eat.”
   “The majority of Puget Sound baseball fans buy logger hats at the bookstore.”
   “All students on campus are really cool.”

Singular “Part of the problem is that it’s too rainy to do homework outside today.”
   “Some variation in sandwich preferences is okay (as long as you agree that toasting is the way to go).”
   “Most of my homework is done...”

Exception “More than one” is always singular.
   “More than one Met cookie is what I need right now.”
7.2.2 Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences. Like here. That sentence is not a complete sentence because it cannot stand on its own and make sense.

So how do you avoid sentence fragments?

- Ensure that your sentence has a subject and a verb and that it expresses a complete thought.
- Word processing programs can help you to identify fragments—but don’t depend on them!
- Mentally take your sentence out of context, then ask yourself, “Does this sentence alone make sense?”

If you do find a sentence fragment, try these two revision tips:

- Add the necessary components of a sentence that the fragment is missing.
- Combine the sentence fragment with another sentence.

Examples of sentence fragments and revisions:

- “To the sub.” → “You should take your sub dishes back to the sub.”
  In this revision, we combine the fragment with the independent clause, “You should take your sub dishes back.” By sticking the fragment on an independent clause, we not only get rid of the fragment, but we also add more specificity to the sentence.

- “All night long!” → “I was in the library all night long!” Just like the previous example, this fix gets rid of the fragment and makes the sentence more specific. “How long were you in the library?” “I was in the library all night long!”

7.2.3 Problems with Parallelism

Parallel sentence structure is a common pattern used to illustrate two or more ideas, items, or phrases that are equally emphasized in a sentence. It’s helpful to use parallel structure when you want to include a list of something or apply a series of words, phrases, or clauses to the same adjective or pronoun. This condenses the sentence, making it more efficient and less repetitive. For instance, say Polly likes to do three things. One way of listing those three things would be to write, “Polly likes to read books, likes to drink coffee, and likes to pet cats.” But that’s a pretty tedious sentence. Instead, you could use parallel structure to condense the sentence: “Polly likes to read books, drink coffee, and pet cats.” In this sentence, the verb phrase “likes to” applies equally to the infinitive phrases “read books,” “drink coffee,” and “pet cats.”

However, sometimes it’s easy to lose yourself while using parallel sentence structure by being inconsistent with your word, phrase, or clause forms. For instance, consider this common incorrect rewriting of the above sentence: “Polly likes to read books, drink coffee, and petting cats.” This is incorrect parallel sentence structure because the word forms are not the same; the verb phrase “likes to” applies to reading books and drinking coffee, but not to petting cats because the verb “petting” takes care of itself. The sentence indicates that Polly “likes to read books,” “likes to drink coffee,” and “likes to petting cats,” which has too many active verbs (“likes to” and “petting”). By replacing the infinitive form of “to pet” with the gerund form “petting,” the sentence now doesn’t make very much sense. Sometimes inconsistent forms can be tricky
to identify, especially when you have a series of complex clauses or phrases. Below are some common examples of parallel structure errors to watch out for.

### 7.2.3.1 Mixing Word Forms

The above sentence is an example of mixing word forms (to read, to drink, and petting). If you have a verb that applies to two or more of the items in the series, it must apply to all items equally in order to preserve correct parallel structure. Take the following example of mixing word forms:

"Oppenheimer is a relaxing place to study; it is calm, quiet, and has lots of windows."

In this sentence, the attributes “calm” and “quiet” equally share the verb “is”: Oppenheimer “is calm” and “is quiet.” However, the last attribute in the series (“has lots of windows”) departs from this structure by introducing another verb, “has,” to characterize the attribute “lots of windows,” throwing the series out of balance. If “is” is applied equally to each attribute, Oppenheimer “is calm,” “is quiet,” and “has lots of windows.” To fix this mixed word form, you must do one of two things: 1) either break up the attributes into two different items using the conjunction “and” or 2) arrange the attributes so they share a single verb and adhere to the parallel structure.

Examples of these fixes are shown below:

- “Oppenheimer is a relaxing place to study; it is calm and quiet and has lots of windows.”
- “Oppenheimer is a relaxing place to study; it is calm, quiet, and airy.”

### 7.2.3.2 Mixing Clause Forms

The same rule may be applied to a series of complex clauses. If you have a verb that applies to two or more clauses in the series, it must apply equally to all clauses in order to maintain parallel structure. Take the following example of mixing clause forms:
“Diversions has cut a lot of paper waste by offering mug discounts, free Cup Karma drinks, more “for-here” options, and by encouraging people to recycle their coffee cup lids and sleeves.”

In this sentence, Diversions has cut a lot of waste by doing two things: 1) offering mug discounts, free Cup Karma drinks, and more “for-here” options and 2) encouraging people to recycle. While the first three clauses in the series (discounts, drinks, and options) all share the verb “offering” equally, the fourth clause (recycling lids and sleeves) only uses the verb “encouraging.” To correct this sentence to preserve parallel structure, you have to insert the conjunction “and” between the second and third clauses to distinguish what Diversions is “offering” from what it is “encouraging.” Take the corrected revision:

“Diversions has cut a lot of paper waste by offering mug discounts, free Cup Karma drinks, and more “for-here” options and by encouraging people to recycle their coffee cup lids and sleeves.”

### 7.2.3.3 Two Nouns Following One Adjective

When you have two or more nouns following an adjective, that adjective must apply to all nouns equally. This can be a tricky mistake to identify; when we read, we often only think to apply the adjective to the noun that immediately follows it in the sentence. However, it’s important to make sure that either all nouns share the same adjective equally or each noun has its own adjective in a series. Take the following example of an adjective that is incorrectly applied to both nouns:

“The Cellar’s rambunctious atmosphere and array of ice cream flavors make it a good place to go to unwind.”

This sentence indicates that the adjective “rambunctious” applies to both “atmosphere” and “array of ice cream flavors.” While the first association makes sense, it would be strange to describe an array of ice cream flavors as “rambunctious.” Instead, both nouns must either share an adjective that describes both of them or they must have their own adjectives.

To fix this sentence, you can do one of two things:

1. add an adjective that applies to “array of ice cream flavors”

   “The Cellar’s rambunctious atmosphere and diverse array of ice cream flavors make it a good place to go to unwind.”

2. repeat the pronoun before “array” to prevent the misperception that it is a “rambunctious array”

   “The Cellar’s rambunctious atmosphere and its array of ice cream flavors make it a good place to go to unwind.”

### 7.2.3.4 Lists After a Colon

When you have a list after a colon, the parallel structure rule should be equally applied to all items in that list. Take this example of a list that does not follow parallel structure:

“The sandwich station at the SUB has the following spread options: hummus, pesto, mayo, mustard, and it also has relish.”
This list breaks parallel structure with the last item, “it also has relish,” which adds both a subject (“it”) and verb (“has”) to the list item (“relish”). To make this sentence adhere to parallel structure, the list item must be in the same form as the other items in the list:

“The sandwich station at the sub has the following spread options: hummus, pesto, mayo, mustard, and relish.”

To avoid these and other parallel structure errors, here are some things to keep in mind while writing and proofreading:

- While writing a list or series, make sure every item in the series is grammatically consistent (all -ing endings vs. infinitive, passive vs. active voice, etc.).
- If you have an adjective or pronoun to describe the first word of a series, apply that descriptor equally to every item in the series to make sure it makes sense.
- Read carefully through your paper, paying close attention to series connected by conjunctions (“and”/“or”) and checking either side of the sentence for correct parallel structure.
- If you have a list or series, isolate every item into its own sentence, identify descriptors you can attribute to every item, and then condense the sentence accordingly.

7.2.4 Problems with Modifiers

7.2.4.1 Misplaced Modifiers

While modifiers can be extremely useful for spicing up sentences, they can sometimes be misplaced too far from the noun they are intending to describe. These misplaced modifiers not only make the sentence confusing to read; they also may actually end up describing something they’re not supposed to describe. For instance, take the following sentence:

“Towering above the heads of the students, we gazed in awe up at the sequoia tree.”

In this sentence, “towering above the heads of the students” is a participial phrase (see Participial phrases in List ??). However, it’s currently being used to describe the pronoun “we.” Unless “we” are giants, this sentence doesn’t make much sense; how can “we” tower above the heads of students? Instead, the participial phrase is likely intended to describe the sequoia tree. Consider a revision that places the modifier next to the noun it describes:

“We gazed in awe up at the sequoia tree towering above the heads of the students.”

Here are a few more examples of misplaced modifiers and their possible revisions:

Example 7.2.1

“Liam sprinted up the staircase to his class on the top floor of McIntyre, which was steep and exhausting.”

The placement of this modifier makes it seem like the top floor of McIntyre is “steep and exhausting.”

Revision:
“Liam sprinted up the staircase, which was steep and exhausting, to his class on the top floor of McIntyre.”

Example 7.2.2

“Whining pleadingly, the owner tried to restrain the dog from jumping excitedly into Jones Fountain.”

This sentence makes it seem like the owner was the one “whining pleadingly,” not the dog!
Revision:

“The owner tried to restrain the dog, which was whining pleadingly, from jumping excitedly into Jones Fountain.”

7.2.4.2 Dangling Modifiers

In addition to misplaced modifiers, a **dangling modifier** describes a noun that is either unclear or absent from the sentence altogether. In these cases, the modifier ends up modifying something else in the sentence that should not be modified. For instance, take the following sentence:

“After writing for hours in Collins Library, the paper was finally finished.”

In this sentence, “after writing for hours” is a participle phrase modifying “the paper.” But a paper can’t write itself! Instead, the participle phrase should modify the subject doing the action (in this case, the student writing the paper):

“After writing for hours in Collins Library, the exhausted student finally finished their paper.”

Here are a few more examples of dangling modifiers and their possible revisions:

Example 7.2.3

“Unfamiliar with the campus layout, it was difficult to find their classroom in Wyatt.”

This sentence is confusing because the modifier, “Unfamiliar with the campus layout,” is modifying a noun that doesn’t exist. To fix this problem, we need to add a noun.
Revision:

“Unfamiliar with the campus layout, the first-year student found it difficult to find their classroom in Wyatt.”

Example 7.2.4

“After reviewing the scholarly article, the author’s methods appear questionable.”

The modifier, “After reviewing the scholarly article,” is trying to modify an absent noun.
Revision:

“After reviewing the scholarly article, I find the author’s methods
questionable.”

7.3 Style and Word Choice

7.3.1 Writing Clearly and Precisely

When you have what you believe to be a brilliant idea and a strong argument, it is sometimes tempting to try to sound impressive by using a lot of words. More is better, right? Not necessarily! If more words and specialized vocabulary will make your meaning more clear to a specific audience, then it’s worth it to use longer, more complex wording. But if complicated language makes the sentence (and your point) more confusing, it’s better to state your ideas simply.

Here are some examples of long-winded ways to say relatively simple things:

- “At this juncture in time ...” → now, currently
- “By virtue of the fact ...” → because
- “For the purpose of ...” → to
- “In all likelihood ...” → probably
- “In the event that ...” → if
- “In this regard, it is of significance that ...” → simply omit and get on with your sentence
- “The truth is that ...” → simply omit and get on with your sentence
- “Until such time as” → until

These kinds of empty phrases do not improve your writing and only add a tiny bit to the length of your paper (and length probably isn’t the most important thing your professor wanted you to produce, anyhow). If you’re hoping to sound scholarly, look closely at the precise and specific scholarly language that is used in your discipline.

Broad use of “this,” especially as the subject of a sentence. Readers like specificity. Using “this” too much, especially as the subject of a sentence (e.g. “This is what I’m talking about.”) conveys too much ambiguity. To what does “this” refer? Instead of writing “this,” try to use an interesting word that refers specifically to what you want to talk about. For example, I could write an essay about my dog, Chuck, and say, “Chuck likes to take walks. This is why I walk him every day.” To avoid using “this” as the subject of the sentence, though, I could say something like: “Chuck likes to take walks. I walk him every day because he loves walks so much.” In this sentence, “this” is replaced with “because he loves walks so much.”

You can also simply restructure the sentence(s) to avoid using “this” as the subject. From the example above, I could also say, “Chuck likes to take walks, so I walk him every day.” Finally, you can think of a noun that tells your reader what “this” is referring to: this quote, this information, this verdict, this distinction, this occurrence, this sentiment, etc.
7.3.2 Making Effective Word Choices

Strong word choice improves the quality of a paper and helps hold the reader's interest; inversely, using words incorrectly or ineffectively can lessen the writer's credibility. As you entrain for forthcoming linguistic endeavors, exploit these pointers to ensure your belles-lettres aren’t as annoying and incorrect as this sentence has been.

Incorrect Word Choice. Incorrect word choice usually occurs when a writer uses a word outside of its standard definition or context. This misuse can happen for a variety of reasons, including the writer having a wrong mental definition of the word, not knowing the word’s popular connotation, or using the word in an inappropriate disciplinary context.

---

**How to avoid misusing words.**

- If there’s a word that comes to mind when you’re writing and you’re not completely sure of its meaning, err on the side of caution and look it up! (We, for example, just looked up “err” to make sure that was the right word to use.)

- If you select a word from a thesaurus, make sure to also look the word up in a dictionary (online, of course). The dictionary definition and example sentences will help you catch any connotations or standard uses of the word that you might not otherwise be familiar with.

- When writing in a specific discipline, it can be difficult to know what words are specific to that discipline and how they are used differently in academic writing than they are in standard, every day conversation. In statistics, for example, “significant” has a very specific meaning (i.e., having statistical importance), and any other uses of the word are incorrect and generally avoided. Similarly, “conjugation” has a very different meaning in biology than it does in Spanish. So how do you avoid misusing words in disciplines with which you are unfamiliar? First, do your course readings! Second, know that you can’t avoid every mistake, but that professors can help guide you. Reading scholarly work in a discipline you’re studying is also an invaluable tool for learning that discipline’s jargon and linguistic preferences.

- See Subsection 7.3.5 to avoid misusing words that sound alike.

---

Ineffective Word Choice. While academic writing usually employs more abstruse and sophisticated language than you find in everyday conversation, sometimes using “big words” simply to sound smart can come across to an audience as pedantic. Words that are overly complicated and obfuscate the meaning of a sentence are therefore ineffective; if the point of writing is to convey meaning clearly, a confusing word should not get in the way of that meaning.

Alternatively, using words or phrases that are too simplistic, overused, or trite can also ineffectively convey meaning to a reader. Passive sentences,
phrases constructed around “to be,” and clichés like “to be honest” all diminish the point you’re trying to convey to a reader.

**Which sentence below do you think is more effective?**

“To be honest, I didn’t think that Hamlet was played by the right actor.”

“The actor who played Hamlet fell five times on stage, broke poor Yorick’s skull, and forgot his lines during the “To be, or not to be...” speech. The directors of the play should have chosen a better actor to play Hamlet.”

*Here are some synonyms that you might consider using to replace common or boring words. Remember to search for the definition of the synonym if you’re uncertain of its meaning or connotations to ensure that it correctly conveys the meaning of your sentence.*
### 7.3.3 Using Passive Constructions Cautiously

The **passive voice** is passive because sentences in this structure de-emphasize the role of the actor in a sentence. An active sentence puts the actor front and center (“Sally hugged Barbara”) whereas a passive sentence holds the actor less prominently and places the action/object acted upon front and center (“Barbara was hugged by Sally”). The active sentence emphasizes Sally as the actor, whereas the passive sentence emphasizes that Barbara received a hug. Note that passive constructions can only occur in sentences with **transitive verbs**, which take direct objects.

Here are some examples of active versus passive voice:

**Active**
- “Sally hugged Barbara.”
- “I did my homework.”

**Passive**
- “Barbara was hugged by Sally.”
- “My homework was done by me.”
Active “My roommate woke me up as she got ready for crew practice.”

Passive “I was woken up by my roommate as she got ready for crew practice.”

Active “We made mistakes.”

Passive “Mistakes were made.”

(Notice how this form completely omits the actor—Who made the mistakes? We don’t know! They just were made...)

Below are some ways you can identify the passive voice. Please note that these tips are general guidelines, not concrete characteristics of every instance of passive voice.

- **Look for “to be” verbs.** The passive voice is often constructed in this format: “to be” + past participle. Notice that the previous sentence is passive. It has “is” as the form of “to be” and “constructed” as the past participle.

- **Look for “by” + a noun/pronoun/proper noun.** As with the example “Barbara was hugged by Sally,” passive sentences often use the word “by” to show that someone or something carried out the action. Barbara wasn’t just hugged, she was hugged by Sally.

- While the passive voice is not grammatically incorrect, most readers (and professors) prefer the active voice because readers generally want to identify the action happening in a piece of writing. Since the active voice makes it easier to identify what is happening and who or what is acting, the active voice usually makes more sense as a writing style. Similarly, the active voice also clarifies the meaning of and give more details about a sentence. Consider these examples:

  Passive “We were asked by the flight attendant to have our luggage put in the overhead compartment by a man next to us who went by the name of Jim.”

  Active “The flight attendant asked us to have Jim, the man sitting next to us, put our luggage in the overhead compartment.”

In both examples, there are three main people: us (the writer), the flight attendant, and Jim. The first example, the one in the passive voice, becomes long and confusing. The reader will have forgotten who asked whom to do what by the time Jim’s name comes up. The second example, however, more clearly explains the scenario because there is less confusion about who is doing what.
The large exception to these preferences is science. Most scientific work tends to be written in the passive voice. An active version of the previous sentence would be, “Most scientists tend to write in the passive voice.” Notice how the first version, the passive one, takes the actor out of the sentence completely. Who does the passive writing in the sciences? The active version answers that question: scientists write in the passive voice in science writing. Sciences tend to use the passive voice to distance the scientist from the science being done. The passive voice is therefore used strategically by the sciences. (Again, the previous sentence could also be active: “The sciences (or scientists) therefore use the passive voice strategically.”)

7.3.4 Using Strong Verbs

While we use “to be” frequently in our every day speech, the verb is often too weak as the main verb in formal writing. Uses of “to be” include: to be, being, am, is, are, was, and were.

Writers prefer not to overuse “to be” because English contains plenty of stronger (i.e., more active, informative, and interesting) verbs. “To be” also frequently indicates that you are using passive voice. (See item number nine on this list.) Using “to be” too much thus makes your writing boring or too passive. Which passage below do you prefer?

“I was going to Diversions when I saw something that was interesting. It was my friend, Sally. Sally was outside and was sleeping on her chemistry textbook.”

“And on my way to Diversions, I happened upon an interesting (and funny) sight: my friend, Sally, had fallen asleep outside, using her chemistry textbook as a pillow!”

Try using a thesaurus to find alternative words. But use caution! Sometimes thesauruses mislead writers when the writer doesn’t fully understand the connotation or typical uses of a synonym.

Here’s a list of strong verbs to consider using. There are short definitions to give you an idea of what the word means, but be sure to look up any words you use to make sure that the contexts in which you’re using them align with their meaning. There may also be alternative meanings that aren’t listed here, so the dictionary and thesaurus will still be your friends.
HELLO
MY NAME IS
Herb the
Strong Verb
Affirm to assert or support
Allude to point out indirectly
Amalgamate to combine or unite pieces into a whole, to merge
Ameliorate to make better
Ascertain to find out or make sure
Bolster to reinforce, support
Censure to criticize severely
Concede to acknowledge or grant something
Concur to agree
Contend to assert or argue
Contest to oppose, challenge, or argue against
Demur to object, be reluctant
Differentiate to make a distinction between
Elucidate to explain, make clear
Enable to make able or powerful, to make possible
Engender to lead to, to produce or cause
Essay to try, attempt
Exacerbate to make worse, exasperate
Excoriate to criticize or denounce severely
Function to act as, operate
Laud to praise
Mitigate to lessen severity or intensity, to alleviate
Obfuscate to obscure
Pervade to permeate, spread throughout
Present to offer, give, introduce, show
Squander to waste, spend, use irresponsibly
Stymie to stop, block
Substantiate to support something with evidence
Supplant to take the place of, replace
Vilify to defame or slander

Note. You don’t need to fill your writing with big, obscure words; instead, you’ll want to use more complex words where appropriate to convey meaning more precisely and concisely.
7.3.5 Considering Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. Because homophones share the same pronunciations (or sound similar), they are commonly confused in writing, especially when you know the spelling of one homophone but intend to convey the other. Below is a list of commonly confused homophones and some example sentences using them. But if you are unsure of a word and it’s not listed here, try looking it up in a dictionary or thesaurus to make sure it’s the word you want!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>allot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot of homework this week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will allot three hours to doing homework today.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>accept</th>
<th>except</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I accept your apology for cutting me in line at Diversions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve tried every coffee flavoring, except lavender.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>addition</th>
<th>edition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In addition to everything else I have to do, I have a dentist appointment tomorrow.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors usually prefer for you to have the latest edition of the textbook for class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aesthetic</th>
<th>ascetic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Chihuly glass exhibit adds an ethereal feel to the aesthetic of Wyatt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many students have different study habits; some are more ascetic than others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>affect</th>
<th>effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep deprivation and endless consumption of energy drinks will eventually affect your health.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The energy drink had an effect on the student’s productivity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>are</th>
<th>our</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are Loggers!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but our mascot is the grizzly bear...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>board</th>
<th>bored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy longboarding down Commencement Walk on sunny days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you ever find yourself bored with an assignment, try to find an angle or aspect that captures your individual interest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>born</th>
<th>borne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Crawford was born in St. Louis, MO.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My current time management skills were borne of terrible procrastination habits, many nights of sleep deprivation, and frantic attempts to meet paper deadlines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>brake</th>
<th>break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to brake in the UPS vans can be tricky.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After studying for my biology exam, working through my music theory homework, and reading my articles for religion class, I’m ready for a break.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>capital</th>
<th>Capitol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class, we debated the ethics of capital punishment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I visited the Capitol in Washington, D.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>complement</th>
<th>compliment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The green ivy nicely complements the red brick of the academic buildings and residence halls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend has the widest grin; they always receive compliments on their smile.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>conscious</th>
<th>conscience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are very environmentally conscious at Puget Sound.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My conscience keeps me from doing unethical science because I know that unethical science is bad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>discreet</th>
<th>discrete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I discreetly slipped a letter to a friend in the Campus Cursive box in Diversions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Politics and Government department has four discrete areas of concentration: U.S. Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>emigration</th>
<th>immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The transfer student’s family emigrated from their home country with the intent to live somewhere else.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transfer student’s family immigrated to this country from their home country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>forth</th>
<th>fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baking chocolate chip cookies brought forth nostalgic memories of my childhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many fourth-year students are expected to complete theses for their respective disciplines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grate</td>
<td>The first-year student accidentally dropped their keycard into the rainwater grate by the SUB. Weyerhauser Hall has some great study spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td>I hear that the view from the astronomy tower in Thompson is sight to behold. I’ve really made a home for myself here at Puget Sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>board</td>
<td>I tend to hoard library books for my research papers right up until their due date. The horde of prospective students, parents, and family members glanced around excitedly as they followed the campus visit guide down Commencement Walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horde</td>
<td>The UPS Golf Team won the tournament by making a hole in one. I was so hungry, I ate the whole Cellar pizza by myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hole</td>
<td>It’s no wonder the school spends so much money on landscaping—the campus is beautiful! The University of Puget Sound is known for its beautiful landscaping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole</td>
<td>Vashon Isle is a great place to go biking on the weekend. I perused the candy aisle in the Cellar in search of a late night snack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear</td>
<td>I know that my keys are around here somewhere. Actually, I have no idea where my keys are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here</td>
<td>I know that the view from the astronomy tower in Thompson is sight to behold. I’ve really made a home for myself here at Puget Sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoard</td>
<td>I tend to hoard library books for my research papers right up until their due date. The horde of prospective students, parents, and family members glanced around excitedly as they followed the campus visit guide down Commencement Walk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horde</td>
<td>The UPS Golf Team won the tournament by making a hole in one. I was so hungry, I ate the whole Cellar pizza by myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it's</td>
<td>It’s no wonder the school spends so much money on landscaping—the campus is beautiful! The University of Puget Sound is known for its beautiful landscaping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>its</td>
<td>Vashon Isle is a great place to go biking on the weekend. I perused the candy aisle in the Cellar in search of a late night snack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isle</td>
<td>I know that my keys are around here somewhere. Actually, I have no idea where my keys are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aisle</td>
<td>I know that the view from the astronomy tower in Thompson is sight to behold. I’ve really made a home for myself here at Puget Sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td>To lessen my homework load, I plan on working on each assignment a bit every day before its due. The lesson on glycolysis offered a fascinating glimpse into the dynamics of the body’s metabolic pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lessen</td>
<td>To lessen my homework load, I plan on working on each assignment a bit every day before its due. The lesson on glycolysis offered a fascinating glimpse into the dynamics of the body’s metabolic pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesson</td>
<td>To lessen my homework load, I plan on working on each assignment a bit every day before its due. The lesson on glycolysis offered a fascinating glimpse into the dynamics of the body’s metabolic pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>levee</td>
<td>In 2011, boulders and gravel were hauled to bolster the Elwha River levee in preparation for the demolition of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams later that year. In my government class, we learned about the tax levy as a federal mechanism for ensuring satisfaction of tax liability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>levy</td>
<td>In 2011, boulders and gravel were hauled to bolster the Elwha River levee in preparation for the demolition of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams later that year. In my government class, we learned about the tax levy as a federal mechanism for ensuring satisfaction of tax liability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>Male, female, trans, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming bathrooms are offered in many of the academic and residential buildings on campus. You can buy stamps, send, and receive mail in the mailroom in the SUB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mail</td>
<td>Male, female, trans, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming bathrooms are offered in many of the academic and residential buildings on campus. You can buy stamps, send, and receive mail in the mailroom in the SUB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pallet</td>
<td>I didn’t bring my bedframe when I moved to campus, so I was worried I might have to build one from wooden pallets. Luckily, the University supplied a bed in my room. After finishing a scrumptious garden tortellini dinner in the SUB, I cleaned my palate with a mango smoothie from the Cellar. The art major carefully arranged their color palette before beginning a new project in Kittridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palate</td>
<td>I didn’t bring my bedframe when I moved to campus, so I was worried I might have to build one from wooden pallets. Luckily, the University supplied a bed in my room. After finishing a scrumptious garden tortellini dinner in the SUB, I cleaned my palate with a mango smoothie from the Cellar. The art major carefully arranged their color palette before beginning a new project in Kittridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palette</td>
<td>I didn’t bring my bedframe when I moved to campus, so I was worried I might have to build one from wooden pallets. Luckily, the University supplied a bed in my room. After finishing a scrumptious garden tortellini dinner in the SUB, I cleaned my palate with a mango smoothie from the Cellar. The art major carefully arranged their color palette before beginning a new project in Kittridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passed</td>
<td>“I need to call my mom to tell her that I passed my math class!” The past few years at UPS have been some of the best years of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>“I need to call my mom to tell her that I passed my math class!” The past few years at UPS have been some of the best years of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td>I made peace with the fact that I would have to finish my homework in the morning. I got the last piece of pizza at the Cellar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piece</td>
<td>I made peace with the fact that I would have to finish my homework in the morning. I got the last piece of pizza at the Cellar!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>Perspectives is a great way to become introduced to new perspectives in the Tacoma community. The prospective student asked the tour guide if the weather was always this sunny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prospective</td>
<td>Perspectives is a great way to become introduced to new perspectives in the Tacoma community. The prospective student asked the tour guide if the weather was always this sunny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pore</td>
<td>The student pored over medieval manuscripts for their middle-ages history class. The baristas in Diversions and Oppenheimer artfully pour coffee for their customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pour</td>
<td>The student pored over medieval manuscripts for their middle-ages history class. The baristas in Diversions and Oppenheimer artfully pour coffee for their customers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It took a while for me to remember that colleges have presidents, not principals. On principle, I try to finish my homework before watching Netflix.

It rains on occasion in Tacoma. President Thomas was our reigning president between 2003-2016.

Reigning in college jitters can be difficult at first; if you are feeling lonely, seek out your Resident Advisors, Orientation Leaders, and Peer Advisors for ways to become more connected on campus.

Since it rains a lot in Tacoma, continuing students recommend that new students bring good raincoats when they move in.

Does this sentence make sense?

In the sunshine after a long rainfall, the Gordon Alcorn Arboretum is a dazzling sight.

Remember to cite all of your sources as you write; otherwise, you might accidentally plagiarize someone else’s work.

"Is Oppenheimer better than Diversions?"

"If all you need is caffeine, then it really doesn’t matter where you get your coffee!"

The Tacoma Chinese Garden and Reconciliation Park is a historic waterfront site commemorating the expulsion of the Chinese population from Tacoma in 1885.

One of the more common homophone errors writers make is between “its” and “it’s.” While they sound the same, “its” is the possessive pronoun of “it” and “it’s” is the contraction of “it is.” One way to differentiate them is to identify why you are using one version or the other. “Its” is used to convey possession by an inanimate object, action, idea, animal, group, or person whose gender is overlooked, as in the sentence “The dog bounded happily toward its owner on Todd Field.” “It’s” with an apostrophe is used to indicate “it is” or the past tense “it was,” as in the sentences “It’s [it is] a universally acknowledged belief that a dog is a human’s best friend,” or “It’s [it has] been great getting to know all the dogs that frequent campus.” If you are trying to figure out which form to use, try splitting “its” into “it is” or “it was” and see if the sentence still makes sense. For instance, the sentence “The dog bounded happily toward its owner on Todd Field,” does not make very much sense, so this may be an incorrect use of “its”.

One of the more common homophone errors writers make is between “its” and “it’s.” While they sound the same, “its” is the possessive pronoun of “it” and “it’s” is the contraction of “it is.” One way to differentiate them is to identify why you are using one version or the other. “Its” is used to convey possession by an inanimate object, action, idea, animal, group, or person whose gender is overlooked, as in the sentence “The dog bounded happily toward its owner on Todd Field.” “It’s” with an apostrophe is used to indicate “it is” or the past tense “it was,” as in the sentences “It’s [it is] a universally acknowledged belief that a dog is a human’s best friend,” or “It’s [it has] been great getting to know all the dogs that frequent campus.” If you are trying to figure out which form to use, try splitting “its” into “it is” or “it was” and see if the sentence still makes sense. For instance, the sentence “The dog bounded happily toward its owner on Todd Field,” does not make very much sense, so this may be an incorrect use of “its.”
CHAPTER 7. WRITING AT THE SENTENCE LEVEL

indication that the correct form to use is “its.”
Below are some sentence examples of “its” and “it’s” to help you distinguish which form to use.

Example 7.3.1 Appropriate usage of “its”.

“The University celebrated its 128th birthday this year.”

“To conserve energy, the hummingbird can slow its metabolic rate to 1/15th its normal rate.”

“The Broadway musical How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying employed only local Seattle actors and performed on its own specially constructed stage.”

“Every year, the humanities department hosts a Palaver dinner for its students.”

Example 7.3.2 Appropriate usage of “it’s”.

“Skiing is fun, but it’s [it is] also a great workout.”

“From Tacoma, it’s [it is] only a brief 45-minute drive to Seattle.”

“I’ve worked for weeks on my paper, but how do I know when it’s [it is] really finished?”

“In spite of the slight breeze, it’s [it has] been a pleasant day here on campus.”

Note. It’s important to remember that contractions (such as “it’s”) are informal and generally not appropriate in academia and should rarely be used in formal academic writing (such as lab reports, analytical essays, etc.). HOWEVER: the use of “it’s” depends on the discipline, professor, writing assignment, and your own creative and scholarly voice, so don’t be afraid to employ it intentionally as you see fit.

7.4 Punctuation and Capitalization Basics

7.4.1 Punctuation

7.4.1.1 Period [:]

One period:

- Use periods at the end of complete sentences. ← Like that!
- Periods can also go in between and after the letters of certain abbreviations. For example, e.g., M.D., etc.

7.4.1.2 Ellipsis [..] (AKA: “dot dot dot”)

Use an ellipsis to show that you have omitted part of a quotation.

Example 7.4.1 The Trail reporter wrote, “The skit, which was held in the Rendezvous Room, showcased … the many skills of Puget Sound’s improv
Use four periods when you omit a quote that contains the end of a sentence. The fourth period indicates to the reader that the sentence has ended and that the next portion of the quoted material comes from a different sentence.

**Example 7.4.2** Original quote—“I love that the SUB has sunbutter and bananas. It’s great because I’m allergic to peanuts.”

Quoted portion—“I love that the SUB has sunbutter ... . It’s great because I’m allergic to peanuts.”

### 7.4.1.3 Exclamation [!] and Question [?] Marks

**Example 7.4.3** “Use an exclamation mark when you want to show excitement! (Like this!)”

**Example 7.4.4** “Do you use a question mark when you ask a question? (Answer: Yes, you do.)”

### 7.4.1.4 Comma [,]

There are five main ways to use a comma. You can use them:

1. to connect *two complete sentences* with the coordinating conjunctions that make up the acronym FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

   “I love using commas, but I need to remember the five main ways to use them!”

   BUT: You DON’T need to put a comma before one of the FANBOYS words if what precedes or follows the word is not a complete sentence (e.g., “I love using commas but can’t remember how to use them” → “but can’t remember how to use them” is not a complete sentence).

2. to separate an *introductory* or *explanatory* phrase from the rest of the sentence.

   “Having finished her last final, Shelly skipped with joy down Commencement Walk.”

   “The dog, who had gotten in the habit of walking every day at 3 p.m., grabbed his leash and ran to his owner.”

3. with transitional phrases (however, moreover, therefore, and for example).

   “For example, you can use a comma in a sentence like this.”

4. to separate items in a list or series.

   “My favorite foods from the SUB include hummus, Greek yogurt, and apples.”

5. with coordinate adjectives (i.e., adjectives that you could combine with “and”).

   “My RA is the nicest, funniest person on campus.”

**Note.** In Standard American English (SAE), commas (and periods) go inside quotation marks.
Comma splices. These occur when a writer joins two independent clauses with a comma (see Basic Sentence Structure). Recall that an independent clause is a sentence with a subject, verb, and complete idea. “Comma splices are weird, they look like this.” Comma splices make sentences less precise, can you see how this comma splice makes my sentence quite confused?

What can you do instead? You have several options!

- You can keep the sentences as they are and replace the comma with a semicolon. This option works for sentences that are too closely related for a period but for which a coordinating conjunction would be inappropriate. (For example, “I like cats; they are cute.”)

- You can split the clauses into two sentences: “Comma splices make sentences less precise. Can you see how the absence of a comma splice improves my sentence(s)?”

- You can put a coordinating conjunction (see Subsection 7.1.1) after the comma and before the second clause: “I love using commas, but I know that they don’t belong between two independent clauses without a conjunction.”

- You can alter the clauses so that one is no longer an independent clause: “Comma splices aren’t great, which is why I don’t use them.”

- Finally, if possible, you can also combine the idea into one sentence/independent clause: “I don’t use comma splices.”

### 7.4.1.5 Semicolon [;]

There are two main reasons to use a semicolon:

1. You can use them to separate items in a list when there are also commas.

   “For dinner, I want to have a sandwich with hummus, cheese, and pickles; some chocolate milk; and some froyo.”
2. You can also use them to separate two independent clauses and to show your reader that those independent clauses are closely related.

“I like to eat sandwiches; they are yummy.”

**Note.** Don’t capitalize the word following the semicolon unless it’s a proper noun.

### 7.4.1.6 Colon [:]

Only use a colon after a complete sentence. Colons tell a reader that what follows is directly related to the sentence that preceded the colon. The following information could be a list of items or another clause.

**Example 7.4.5** “Please grab me a couple of things from The Cellar: a container of ice cream, a carton of eggs, and some guacamole.”

**Example 7.4.6** “I learned about the coolest thing in class today: a long time ago, a scientist conducted an experiment where he put tiny pants on frogs.”

**Note.** You don’t usually need to capitalize the word following a colon (unless it’s a proper noun), but some style guides recommend it, so if you have questions, as always, ask your professor.

### 7.4.1.7 Dash [–] and [—]

Dashes—and there are two types—are used to hyphenate, to indicate ranges, or to set apart important or noteworthy things in a sentence.

The *en dash* (also known as a hyphen). This dash is the dash that appears when you hit the dash key once. You can use it to hyphenate words (like *in-depth*) or to show a range (1894–1904 or numbers 1–5).

The *em dash* (also known as a dash). Make an em dash by hitting the dash key twice—like this! These longer dashes are what you use to set things apart—you can use them with fragments or complete sentences. Like the earlier example—the one up above—you can use two em dashes to set something apart, or you can use one em dash like the previous two sentences.

### 7.4.1.8 Parentheses [(these)]

Aside from citations (see Chapter 8), parentheses are used in writing to separate words, phrases, or sentences from the main text. When you want to add additional information that doesn’t fit well within the main part of a sentence, you can use parentheses to inform your reader while simultaneously keeping your sentence flowing (like this). (Or you can just use parentheses on their own to indicate that something is an aside or afterthought.) For more details on how to use other types of punctuation with parentheses (e.g., where does the period go?!), see Item 2!

You can also use parentheses in area codes, like 253.879.3404 (which is, coincidentally, the phone number to the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching [CWLT]).

### 7.4.1.9 Brackets [[these]]

Brackets are kind of weird and don’t seem to come up much, but, in general, you can associate them with quoted or parenthetical material. You should use brackets when you:
• include a quote that requires clarification to make sense.
  “She said that they [her roommates] are the best.”

• include a quote that doesn’t fit well within the syntax of your sentence
  (e.g., your quote starts with a lowercase letter, but you put it at the
  beginning of a sentence).
  “[T]hey are the best,” Shelly said about her roommates.
  Shelly loved her roommates last year; she said “they [were] the best.”
  (Here, we’ve changed the present tense “are” to the past tense “were” in
  order to match the tense of the sentence.)

• want to tell your reader that you have or haven’t added something (e.g.,
  italics or a grammatical mistake) to a quote.
  “Rainier looked so beautiful today” [emphasis in original].
  The baby said, “the doggie ated [sic] my sandwich.”

• include a short phrase in another language.
  “Je t’aime [I love you],” she said to her cat.

• want to put parentheses inside parentheses.
  (I like to use parentheses [but not all the time].)

7.4.1.10 Quotation Marks

When you quote something, you are exactly replicating the words, phrases, and
sentences of another source. Therefore, whenever you are quoting something
directly, it’s always a good idea to make sure you copy the quotation exactly
as it appears in the source. Otherwise, you’re inadvertently changing what the
quote is saying! But sometimes when you write longer and more complicated
quotes, you may forget to insert commas or emphases, type a wrong word, or
end the quote incorrectly. Besides simply trying to copy the quote exactly,
there are a few other guidelines to keep in mind while incorporating quotes
into your writing.

Quoting complete sentences.

Enclose the quote within two sets of quotation marks All
quotes require two sets of quotation marks, one set signify-
ing the beginning of the quote and the other signifying the end. Therefore, whenever you use one set of quotations, be sure you follow them up with a second set at the end of the quote. For instance, take the following sentences:

According to the first-year seminar student, “The CWLT is a great place to share your ideas, receive feedback on drafts, and improve your editing skills.”

In the first-year seminar student’s reaction to going to the CWLT, the phrase “share your ideas” evokes a sense of collaboration and engagement with the writing process.

**Preface the quote with a comma after the preceding word**
In order to introduce your quote to the reader, place a comma after the dialogue tag or introductory phrase that comes before your quote. For instance:

Riley said in response to the student, “Wow, I guess I had better make an appointment at the CWLT, then!”

**Capitalize the quoted sentence** If you are quoting a complete sentence, capitalize the first letter of the quoted sentence.

The CWLT states on its webpage, “The mission of the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching is to provide opportunities for all Puget Sound students to achieve their academic goals.”

Kaden exclaimed, “My paper is due next week and I haven’t even started thinking about it! Maybe I should make a writing appointment...”

**End each quoted sentence within the quotation marks** If you are ending your sentence with a quoted sentence, end the quote with a period, exclamation point, or ellipsis before the final set of quotation marks.

**Integrate your quotes into the grammar of your sentence**
If you are breaking your quoted sentence into two parts, end the first part with a comma and do not capitalize the second part.

“I’m kind of scared to make a writing appointment,” the first-year student acknowledged, “but I think I will anyway.”

“While sharing your writing with another person can feel intimidating,” the professor reassured, “the writing advisors at the CWLT are very nice and accommodating.”
Use an ellipsis to replace omitted source material

Sometimes the information you want to quote will be near the beginning or end of a long sentence or passage, but the material in between may not be applicable or useful to you. If this is the case, you can use an ellipsis (...) to replace the material you are omitting. However, it’s important that the material you are replacing does not change the meaning or intent of the source material.

According to the director of the CWLT, Professor Julie Nelson Christoph, “The center offers a safe space for collaborative engagement with the writing process, creative and intellectual exploration, ... and interdisciplinary interaction between peers, faculty, and staff.”

Because any quote comes from a larger context, an ellipsis is only needed at the beginning or end of a quote if it would appear otherwise that the entire sentence was quoted.

For example, if this were the original sentence, “I have never seen The Postmen play a game, but I really enjoy watching ultimate games because the players have so many cool frisbee throws!” then you would need an ellipsis if you cut the introductory or concluding clause: “… I really enjoy watching ultimate games … .”

Use brackets to indicate non-standard elements or changes

Sometimes direct quotes have spelling or grammatical deviations from SAE. In order to preserve the original voice, it’s important to include these deviations when possible and acknowledge them with an indicator ([sic], Latin for “thus”) after the perceived deviation. Similarly, if a part of your source material is underlined or italicized or in some other way emphasized, you should generally include this in your quotation. Emphases are indicated differently based on the citation style you are using (see Chapter 8), but a basic guideline is to indicate emphases with “[emphasis in original]” at the end of or immediately following the quoted sentence.

The subject tutor asked the seminar class, “Y’all [sic] going to the “Long Night Against Procrastination” at the CWLT?”

The class responded, “Of course we’re going to the “Long Night Against Procrastination” [emphasis in original].”

Use brackets to enclose important nouns missing in quote

Sometimes sentences omit a previously referred-to noun, person, or object to avoid unnecessary repetition, instead replacing the item with “it” or “they.” In order to specify the identity of the item, you can use brackets to identify it in place of or immediately after the pronoun.
The writing advisor emphasized, “[The CWLT] is a great place to work collaboratively on essay ideas or subject material as well as independently on homework.”

“Additionally, if you need a coffee or tea break, it [the CWLT] is located conveniently close to Diversions,” continued the writing advisor.

Quoting fragments.

**Quoted fragments should not be capitalized** If you are quoting only a piece or fragment of the source material, the fragment does not need to be capitalized.

Although Jordan knew the due date for the lab report was impending, they remarked that they felt a “sudden spasm of panic” when they realized the report was due tomorrow.

Anxious about their upcoming organic chemistry exam, the student noted that their appointment with the chemistry subject tutor made them feel “calm and collected.”

**Incorporate quoted fragments into syntax of sentence** For instance, if you are listing quoted words or phrases, be sure they adhere to parallel sentence structure (see Subsection 7.2.3) and separate them with commas inside of the quotation marks. Finally, make sure the resulting sentence is grammatically correct and complete.

After their meeting with Rachael Shelden, assistant director of the CWLT, the student remarked that they felt more “calm,” “confident,” and “empowered” and left feeling “motivated to become more organized.”

**Use block quotes for large quoted sections** If you are quoting long sections of a text, introduce the passage with a colon or comma, indent the passage, and omit quotation marks.

When quoting more than four lines of prose or more than three lines of poetry, introduce the quote with an introductory sentence ending with a comma or colon. Begin the quotation on a new line and indent the entire passage one inch from the left margin. Try to keep spacing and line breaks as close to the original formatting as possible.

According to its website, the CWLT emphasizes how easy it is to make an appointment:

There are several ways for students to make an appointment to meet with a writing advisor or
subject tutor. The fastest ways are to stop by the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (Howarth 109) or to call 253.879.3404. Students can also request appointments by using the forms for a writing appointment or for a subject tutoring appointment. Before requesting an appointment, it is helpful to consult the schedules for writing advisor and subject tutor hours.

7.4.1.11 Apostrophes

Apostrophes, or single quotation marks, most often mark possession. However, due to the inconsistent nature of English morphology, the task of marking possession is rather complicated.

To indicate possession for ....

A singular noun or proper noun [noun] + ['] + [s]

[Cat] + ['] + [s] = Cat’s
[Matt] + ['] + [s] = Matt’s

A singular noun or proper noun ending in “s” [noun] + ['] (+ [s])

That’s right. The final “s” is optional. There is no standard. Ask your professor for their preference and remain consistent in your usage.

[Bus] + ['] (+ [s]) = Bus’ or Bus’s
[Jess] + ['] (+ [s]) = Jess’ or Jess’s

A plural noun ending in “s” or “es” [noun] + [']

[Princesses] + ['] = Princesses’

A plural noun not ending in “s” [noun] + ['] + [s]

[Children] + ['] + [s] = Children’s

A plural proper noun ending in “s” [noun] + [']

[Joneses] + ['] = Joneses’

A singular compound noun [compound noun] + ['] + [s]

[Father-in-law] + ['] + [s] = Father-in-law’s
A plural compound noun [compound noun] + [‘] + [s]  

Joint possession [Noun and noun] + [‘] + [s]  
[Gina and Tommy] + [‘] + [s] = Gina and Tommy’s

Joint possession including a personal pronoun [Noun] + [‘] + [s] and [possessive pronoun]  
[Gina] + [‘] + [s] and [my] = Gina’s and my

Individual possession [Noun] + [‘] + [s] and [noun] + [‘] + [s]  
[Gina] + [‘] + [s] and [Tommy] + [‘] + [s] = Gina’s and Tommy’s

Apostrophes are also used to mark contractions, or two words combined, such as “could” and “have,” which can be contracted, or shortened, to “could’ve.” A single apostrophe takes the place of omitted letters.

- Can’t
- We’d
- It’s
- Won’t

“Won’t” is an interesting case because its spelling does not correspond to its implied contraction “will not.” Linguists suspect that this is because, over time, the pronunciation of the contraction shifted such that “will” became “woll,” resulting in the current form “won’t.” It should be noted that the above contractions constitute their own words without an apostrophe (cant, wed, its, and wont are all words). In order to avoid confusion, it is important to include the apostrophe in contractions.

Apostrophes can also come at the front of a word, such as “’Twas” to mark omitted letters (omitted from “’Twas” is the letter “I”: “It was”).

Apostrophes can also be used in conjunction with single letters (such as grades), abbreviations, and numerals (including years). There are no standard rules for these usages. Ask your professor for their preference and be consistent. Aim for clarity where necessary. For instance, the plural form “As” (referring to the letter grade) will likely be misread as “As” the word. Use an apostrophe here (“A’s”).

Generally accepted usages:

- Ph.D.s
- Ph.D.’s
- 2010’s
- 2010’s
- ’10s
- 10’s
Beware the personal pronouns “hers,” “yours,” “ours,” “its,” “theirs,” and “whose,” which do not use an apostrophe.

7.4.2 Capitalization

If English were a more consistent language, capitalization might not be such a pain. Unfortunately, it’s not, though there are some general guidelines that can help you to decide whether a word should be capitalized or not.

**General Guidelines.**

- Proper nouns should be capitalized.
  - Proper nouns are basically names, though they aren’t limited to humans.
  - Proper nouns name things ranging from schools (University of Puget Sound) to coffee shops (Diversions Cafe) to anthropomorphized bears (Grizz).
  - Chances are, if it specifies a particular thing as opposed to that thing in general (University of Puget Sound vs. college), capitalize it!
    That said, there are many variables to consider and many exceptions. If you’re unsure about whether or not to capitalize races like “black” and “white,” on which there is no consensus, ask. (Also, see Chapter 6 where we discuss this issue further.)

- Professional titles should be capitalized only when they precede the title-holder’s name.
  - Capitalize “president” in the sentence “President Isiaah Crawford joined the university in 2016.”
  - Do not capitalize “president” in the sentence “The 14th president of the University of Puget Sound is Isiaah Crawford.”

- But don’t capitalize occupational designators!
  - The university’s mascot Grizz
  - The movie’s director Christopher Nolan

- What about “professor?”
  - Would it be “I asked professor Julie Nelson Christoph a question about capitalization” or “I asked Professor Julie Nelson Christoph a question about capitalization”?
  - There are different theories about “professor,” which makes it, and others like it, problematic. There is, of course, no clear answer. In this case, it would be better to ask.
• Capitalize formal titles when the title is used to address someone.
  ○ “Hello, Admiral.”
  ○ “How was your day, Admiral?”
  ○ How arbitrary is this rule? Unfortunately, Google does not provide a gradient that will tell you how formal a given title is. It is relatively safe to assume that a title such as “Admiral” is formal enough to be capitalized, while a title such as “mister” is more ambiguous. The lack of a standard will likely cause some confusion at some point in your college career. Once again, do not be afraid to ask.

• Capitalize family member’s kinship names (Mom, Father) when they preface a proper name or when they are used in place of the name.
  ○ “I gave a peach to Mother.”
  ○ “We returned the car to Uncle John.”

• Do not capitalize kinship names when they follow a possessive pronoun, when they follow a proper name, or when they do not refer to a specific person.
  ○ “My mom bought me some shoes.”
  ○ “The Franco brothers are good actors (debatable).”
  ○ “Emperor penguins make good mothers/fathers.”

• Capitalize nicknames.
  “I gave Scooby the sandwich.”

• Capitalize geographical regions but do not capitalize the points of a compass.
  ○ “My friend lives in the Midwest.”
  ○ “We drove east for five hours.”
  ○ “The sunsets are especially beautiful on the West Coast.”
  ○ “The eastern coast of O’ahu has nice beaches.”

• Do not capitalize the word “the” before proper nouns unless the word “the” is itself a part of the proper noun.
  ○ “I attend the University of Puget Sound.”
  ○ “In class, we read The Great Gatsby.”

• Capitalize the first word in a complete quotation, or a quotation set off by a comma, even when the quotation begins in the middle of a sentence.
  But the Sound Writing handbook said, “The first word in a quotation should be capitalized!”
• Do not capitalize the first word in a quotation that reads as part of the sentence (is not set off by a comma).

I would have capitalized the first word in the quote, but the handbook said that I should “not capitalize the first word in a quotation that reads as part of the sentence.”

• Capitalize specific course names, but do not capitalize academic subjects.

“I enjoyed taking Multivariable Calculus, though I’m by no means a mathematics major.”

• Do not capitalize the first item in a list after a colon.

“To do: homework, cook dinner, sleep.”

**Titles.**

• Knowing what to capitalize in titles can be incredibly confusing and frustrating. Different styles have their own policies, so consult the official stylebooks for the style in which you’re writing. In general, when capitalizing, it is usually safe to capitalize:

  ◦ The title’s first word
  ◦ Adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, nouns, proper nouns, and verbs (except the “to” in infinitives)

• It is usually safe not to capitalize:

  ◦ Articles (a, an, the)
  ◦ Coordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, for, yet, so, nor)

• It is also fairly painless to find a capitalization automator online, which will capitalize your title according to the stylesheet you choose. (Google search “Capitalize my title.”)

### 7.5 Top 10 Confusing Things in English

1. Is it “She gave the book to Bob and I” or “She gave the book to Bob and me”?

   Take Bob out of the picture completely (sorry, Bob). Would you say “She gave I the book” or “She gave me the book”? Right! You’d say “She gave me the book,” so you would say “She gave the book to Bob and me.”

2. Does the period go inside the parentheses or outside of them?

   Is the parenthetical statement part of a sentence, or does the statement stand alone within parentheses?
• If it’s part of a sentence, put the period outside the parentheses:
  “I like to go to the sub for sandwiches (and cookies).”
• If it stands alone, put the period inside the parentheses:
  “I like to go to the sub. (There are really good cookies there.)”

Additional Note. If the remark inside the parentheses requires an
exclamation or a question mark but is part of the sentence, then you do both: “I like to go to the sub for sandwiches (and cookies!).”

3. Could of → Could’ve
Remember that there are differences between written and spoken lan-
guage! Although you hear the word “of” when you say this, what you’re actu-
ally saying is “ve”—the last half of “have.” Because the sounds are
the same when spoken and therefore the meaning of the phrase is un-
obstructed, it’s easy to forget the distinction while writing. But, since
written language requires the distinction to retain the meaning of the
sentence, writers instead use the contraction “could’ve.”

4. Lay vs. Lie and Laid vs. Lain
Maybe just forget about this one. (Just kidding—kind of.) Despite
being such a wonderful thing, the act of lying (laying?) down can cause
a world of pain when trying to write about it. The crucial thing you must
determine is what (or who) is doing the laying/lying: (1) Is someone or
something lying down on their own? (2) Or is someone laying something
(or someone) else down?

Present tense:
• Lie = “You lie down.”
• Lay = “You lay something down.”

Seems easy enough, but, unfortunately, it gets more confusing.
Past tense:
• Lie → lay = “You lay down too often.”
• Lay → lie = “You lie something down.”

Past participle:
• Lie → lain = “You have lain down for too long.”
• Lay → laid = “You have laid down far too many things today.”

-ing versions:
• Lie → lying = “You have been lying around all day!”
• Lay → laying = “You have been laying things all over the house!”

A Tip for the Indolent. If you don’t want to memorize all of these
differences, just bookmark this writing handbook and refer back to it
whenever you need to.

5. Drink/drank/drunk
• Drink = present tense = “I drink water frequently.”
• Drank = past tense = “I drank water yesterday.”
6. Who vs. Whom

This distinction is rapidly falling out of use, but a tip about how to remember the different usages might come in handy.

If you would say “him,” “her,” or “them,” then you should use whom. If you would say “he,” “she,” or “they,” then use who.

Examples:

- “I am speaking to her.” → “To whom am I speaking?”
- “She called.” → “Who called?”
- “I envy him.” → “He’s the person whom I envy.”

7. Fewer vs. Less

This one is simple! If you can count it, use “fewer.” If you can’t count it, use “less.”

Examples:

- “I want fewer homework assignments.”
- “I want less homework.”
- “I want fewer cartons of milk.”
- “I want less milk.”

8. Who’s vs. Whose

Possessives in English are the worst! “Who’s” seems like it would denote possession because it has an apostrophe, which is how we usually indicate that someone has something (with the exception of possessive pronouns like hers, his, theirs, and yours, of course...). But, unfortunately, “who’s” is a contraction of “who is” or “who has” and it has nothing to do with possession.

Examples:

- “Who’s that over there?” → “Who is that over there?”
- “She’s the one who’s been helping me.” → “She is the one who has been helping me.”

“Whose,” on the other hand, indicates that someone, “who,” possesses something. If you’re a fan of early 2000s American comedy, you might use Whose Line is it Anyway? as a mnemonic device.

Examples:

- “Whose baby is that?” → “To whom does that baby belong?”
- “My friend, whose bike was stolen, decided to buy a U-lock.” → “My friend, who possessed a bike that was stolen, decided to buy a U-lock.”

9. Speaking of possessive pronouns...

Similarly to “who’s” looking like the possessive version of “who,” the possessive versions of the pronouns “it, him, her, your, their, and our” can be misleading. Although the apostrophe (it’s, her’s, your’s, their’s, and our’s) is tempting to include, leave it out! The correct possessive pronouns are: its, his, hers, yours, theirs, and ours.
10. Where do commas and periods go when you’re using quotation marks?

In Standard American English, commas and periods go inside “quotation marks.” The exception to this guideline is for some citation styles, like MLA, which “look like this” (page number).
Chapter 8

Citations

We’ll just go ahead and say it: citations are a pain. While everyone agrees that clear references to the sources you use are essential to good scholarship, almost no one likes actually keeping track of and writing out citations. But, alas, they must be done! We hope that this section will enable you to think about citations in a new way, one less about memorizing styles and more about understanding the conceptual and practical foundations of citing sources.

8.1 The Basics

When writing citations, the most basic question you need to ask yourself is, “What information would someone need to find this source on their own?” Although nowadays you’d likely use your phone to take a picture of a product you want to be able to find again (your favorite brand of bread, for example), citations require a little more effort. The basic principle, however, is the same. When taking a picture to remember something, you make sure that you have the name and any other identifying information that will help you find it again. Similarly, when writing a citation, you want to make sure you include the basic identifying features of a source, namely the author, title, date, and publisher.

Citations serve many purposes. Beyond allowing others to find the sources you use, citations also give your audience clues about the type of information you’ve used, where that information came from, and how reliable the information is within a particular context, all without having to go find the source directly. There are two main categories of each citation style: in-text citations and full citations. In-text citations provide a reader with immediate information about the source from which a piece of information came. Full citations provide a reader with more complete information about the source.

8.1.1 Background

In this chapter, we’ll discuss the three major citation styles you’ll encounter during your time at Puget Sound: MLA (Modern Language Association), CMS (Chicago Manual of Style), and APA (American Psychological Association).

In general, here are some differences between the styles:
8.1.2 Basic Components

No matter the style, the basic components you need for each type of source remain relatively constant. Here are the components for a few types of frequently used sources:

- Author(s)
- Title
- Date
- Publisher
- Publisher location
- Author(s)
- Title
- Date
- Publisher (AKA the journal name)
- Page range of the article
- Author(s)
- Title
- Date published or updated
- Website name
- Date accessed

List 8.1.1: Books  List 8.1.2: Journal Articles  List 8.1.3: Websites

You might be asking us, “But why do I need all of this information?” No, citation guides are not out to get you! Each piece of a citation has a specific purpose. Here are some reasons behind the information you need. Hopefully this context will 1) help you understand what the citation is doing and why, and 2) help you use other people’s sources more effectively!
Author Knowing the author of a source can ...

• help you to determine the academic reputation of the author and track down other, related works.

Title Knowing the title of a source can ...

• help the reader to determine whether to read the source in its entirety.
• help you to differentiate between sources with the same author.

Date Knowing how old a source is can ...

• help you to determine its relevance and scholarly context.
• help you to differentiate between sources with the same author (particularly for year/date in-text citations).

Publisher Knowing the publisher can ...

• help you and your reader locate the source.
• help you to identify the validity or academic level of a source.
  (Is the publisher an academic press, or is it a more popular press, like Penguin?)

Publisher Location Knowing the publisher location is ...

• a way to indicate which printing of a source you have, since versions sometimes vary by location.

Journal Name Knowing the name of the journal in which the article was published can ...

• help you and your reader to locate the source.
• give an idea of the discipline a source was published in.
  (Was the article published in social psychology or sociology?)
• help you to identify the academic reputation of the article’s home.

Page Range of Article Knowing the page range of an article can ...

• help you and your reader to locate the article in a physical copy of the journal (they’re not just online!).
• determine whether you really want to read a 40-page article on significance, or just skim it (see Chapter 2).

Website Name Knowing the website name of a source can ...

• help you and your reader to locate the source.
• help you to identify the validity of a source (e.g., did the information come from k00keem0nster.com or harvard.edu?).

Date Published or Updated Knowing the date published or updated can ...

• give an idea of how old a source is.
• tell your reader if the source has been updated recently.

Date Accessed If the source is updated regularly, knowing the date a source was accessed can ...

• make it easier to locate which version of a source you used.
8.1.3 In–text Citations

For citation styles that include citations in parenthesis in the body of your paper (also known as parenthetic citations), it’s crucial that the in–text citation (the part in your paper that’s in parenthesis) corresponds exactly with the full reference at the end of the paper in the Works Cited or References section. But parenthetic citations are also designed to offer information with minimal disruption to the reader’s engagement with the text; if some of the citation information is in the sentence itself, then there’s no need to repeat the information in the parenthesis.

Here are some examples of how to do parenthetic citations. The citations in this section are MLA format, but the general principles apply in parenthetic formats such as APA and Chicago Author Date format (the Chicago formatting style that doesn’t use footnotes).

1. If you’re quoting an author and don’t reference the author in your sentence, then you need to include both pieces of information in your in–text citation.

   e.g. The narrator describes how “…the great city of Yershalayim had vanished as though it had never been” (Bulgakov 312).

2. If there are multiple references to the same source and it is clear from the context what the source is, omit the author’s name after the first parenthetical reference.

   e.g. The narrator describes how “…the great city of Yershalayim had vanished as though it had never been” (Bulgakov 312) and, likewise, how “the city itself [Moscow] had long ago disappeared,” metaphorically connecting the two cities (382).

3. If there are two authors, include both of their names in the citation.

   e.g. Realism began as a style of writing that allowed an emerging middle class to identify the events of their daily lives with those that they read about (Knight and Woodman 1).

4. If you reference the author in your sentence, you don’t need to repeat the author’s name in your citation.

   e.g. In Anna Karenina, Tolstoy empathizes so consummately with all his characters (even the non–human ones) that large sections of part 6, chapter 9 are told from the perspective of Levin’s dog, Laska (1266).

5. Make sure to spell and capitalize the author’s name as they prefer. With last names that include prefixes, do a Google search if you’re not sure
what part of the author’s name is their last name. Some authors choose not to capitalize their names, and it’s important to respect that choice.

e.g. Foreshadowing death, *Blood Wedding*’s Beggarwoman in states, “They’ll not leave here. The sound of the river / will drown in the sound of the trees / the broken flight of their cries. / It must be here, and soon. I am weary” (García Lorca 3.1.92-95).

e.g. In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, bell hooks advocates for a form of epistemological agency—what she terms an “oppositional gaze”—that can “look back” at the gaze of traditional power (131).

6. Sometimes you may not know the author’s name, and in that case, the first word in the citation should be the first word that is in the Works Cited entry.

e.g. Reviews of her work typically praise her flair for language but hint at controversy about her message, as in this review in the Santa Cruz paper of her novel: “It is a remarkable production, containing much that is commendable and more that is objectionable, in sentiment and aim” (“Ideal”).

7. Sometimes you may be citing multiple works by the same author, so it’s not enough to mention just the author’s name in the citation, leaving your readers to wonder which entry by that author is the one you’re referencing. In those cases, include in your citation the title or just the first word or two of the title if it’s a long title.

e.g. As scholar Margaret Thickstun succinctly puts it, Paradise Lost “is about the education of its main characters and at the same time dedicated to the education of its reader” (Moral Education 1).

8. Usually it’s best when quoting to go to the original source, but sometimes that’s not possible (perhaps the original quote is very old or is only available in an archive). In those cases, you should mention the original source author in your sentence, but then give the source where you read the quote in your actual citation, with the indication “qtd. in” so that your readers know you aren’t quoting the source from the original. Sometimes there are errors in quotes that you find this way. It may be useful in those cases to indicate that you are quoting exactly what your source wrote, by inserting after the word that looks incorrect [sic] (which comes from the Latin phrase sic erat scriptum, or “thus was it written”).

e.g. The discourse was sometimes ridiculously disconnected from the practical difficulties presented by western geography and resources, as in the following statement by Congressman Joshua Pilcher in 1831: “‘[one] must know little of the American people, who supposes that they can be stopped by any thing*[sic]*in the shape of mountains, deserts, seas, or rivers’” (qtd. in Emmons 6).

8.2 Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unethical and has serious repercussions at the University of Puget Sound. As the *MLA Handbook* (8th Edition) reads, “Plagiarism is presenting another person’s ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one’s own” (6–7). If I hadn’t cited the *MLA Handbook* just now and had presented the sentence as my own, I would have plagiarized and would have been fired. This
is why citing is important and why professionals place so much emphasis on academic integrity. Below are some pointers on how to avoid plagiarism.

Because plagiarism is the act of claiming another’s intellectual output as your own, plagiarism includes more than not quoting text that ought to be quoted; plagiarism also includes not attributing authorship to ideas that are not originally yours and framing as your own a paper that someone else wrote (even if you paid them). It is also considered plagiarism to reuse an essay that you had previously written. The University of Puget Sound has a policy forbidding the reuse of previous work without express permission from your instructor.

For more information on Puget Sound policies on plagiarism, please see the Puget Sound Academic Handbook.

Plagiarism is hardly ever intended. More often, a student who plagiarizes will be unaware that they are doing so. Here are some suggestions to help you avoid plagiarizing.

**Write down everything** When you’re doing research, keep track of all of your sources, especially sources from which you quote or paraphrase. If you’re drafting and don’t want to break your focus, leave a comment to remind yourself to cite the source later. (A knowledge-management tool such as Zotero can help you to keep track of your sources.)

**Attribute everything** The most important thing to include when attributing authorship is the author’s name. This can be done in text, in parentheses, or in a note. If the source does not name an author, provide the title of the source. It is also useful to provide page or line numbers whenever possible. It is safest and often most effective rhetorically to credit the author or source as near to the attributed material as possible; attribution should occur within the same sentence as the attributed material. (For information about the conventions of attribution, both textual and parenthetical, see Section 8.1.)

**When in doubt, quote** Paraphrasing presents problems for students, primarily because the line between acceptable paraphrase and plagiarism is somewhat arbitrary. Of course, this shouldn’t be a problem if you attribute the paraphrased information to its original author(s). Though disciplines and styles have different preferences, the transparency of quoting makes it a safe way to present information that isn’t your own. Quoting, however, should never take the place of attributing authorship.

**Not everything needs a citation** Any knowledge that both you and your readers share need not be cited. For instance, it is probably safe to assume that your readers will know that plagiarism is unethical. You could make such a statement without feeling the need to attribute it. However, it would be necessary to attribute authorship to a statement suggesting that plagiarism is ethical—for such an idea is not likely to be shared by your readers. That said, when in doubt, attribute. There’s little, if anything, wrong with attributing too much, while attributing too little can be disastrous. It is in your best interest to cite.
8.3 Citing a Book with One Author

8.3.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year). Title of work. City of Publication: Publisher.

In-text: (McCarthy, 2006)

8.3.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Work. City of Publication: Publisher, year.


Notes. First appearance.\(^1\) Consecutive appearances.\(^2\) Nonconsecutive appearances.\(^3\)

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.3.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Work. Translated by or Edited by First Name Last Name (if applicable), Vol. Number (if applicable), City of Publication\(^*,\) Publisher\(^*,\) year\(^*\).

*Here list any other contributors to the work with the method of their contribution noted (e.g., Translated by Emily Wilson).

**Include only if work was published before 1900, has different versions in

\(^2\)Ibid., 34.
\(^3\)McCarthy, The Road, 5.
different countries or is a rare book.

∗∗∗For university presses, abbreviate University Press with UP.

In-text: (McCarthy 5)

### 8.4 Citing a Book With Multiple Authors

#### 8.4.1 APA

Author 1 Last Name, Initials, & Author 2 Last Name, First initial. (Year).
*Title of work* City of Publication: Publisher.
In-text: (Bowler & Morus, 2005)

#### 8.4.2 Chicago

Author 1 Last Name, First Name, and Author 2 First Name Last Name. *Title of Work* City of Publication: Publisher, year.

**Notes.** First appearance.¹ Consecutive appearances.² Nonconsecutive appearances.³

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

#### 8.4.3 MLA

Two authors

**Author 1 Last Name, First Name, and Author 2 First Name Last Name. Title of Work** Translated by or Edited by*First Name Last Name (if applicable), Vol. Number (if applicable), City of Publication**, Publisher**, year.**

*Here list any other contributors to the work with the method of their contribution noted (e.g. Translated by Emily Wilson).

**Include only if work was published before 1900, has different versions in

²Ibid., 47.
different countries or is a rare book.

For university presses, abbreviate University Press with UP.


In-text: (Bowler and Morus 12)

Three or more authors

Author 1 Last Name, First Name, et al. Title of Work. Translated by or Edited by First Name Last Name (if applicable), Vol. Number (if applicable), City of Publication** Publisher, year.

*Here list any other contributors to the work with the method of their contribution noted (e.g. Translated by Emily Wilson).

**include only if work was published before 1900, has different versions in different countries or is a rare book.


In-text: (Berenstain et al. 18)

8.5 Citing an Edition Other Than the First

8.5.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year). Title of work (edition number ed.). City of Publication: Publisher.


In-text: (Tannsjo, 2008)

8.5.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Work. Number edition ed. (City of Publication: Publisher), year.


Notes. First appearance. ¹ Consecutive appearances. ² Nonconsecutive appearances. ³

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

²Ibid., 45.
³Tannsjo, Understanding Ethics, 27.
8.5.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Chapter or Section.” (if applicable) Title of Work. Translated by or Edited by* First Name Last Name (if applicable), Vol. Number (if applicable), Number edition ed., City of Publication∗∗, Publisher, Year.

*Here list any other contributors to the work with the method of their contribution noted (e.g. Translated by Emily Wilson).

**Include only if work was published before 1900, has different versions in different countries or is a rare book.


8.6 Citing a Chapter in an Edited Book

8.6.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year of publication). Title of chapter. In Editors’ first Initials Last Names (Eds.), Title of anthology (pp. Page range). City of publication, State: Publisher.


8.6.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Chapter.” In Title of Anthology, edited by Editors’ First Names Last Names, Page range. City of publication: Publisher, Year of publication.

8.6.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Chapter.” Title of Anthology. Translated by or Edited by* First Name Last Name (if applicable), vol. number (if applicable), Number edition ed. City of publication**. Publisher, Year of publication.

*Here list any other contributors to the work with the method of their contribution noted (e.g. Translated by Emily Wilson).

**Include only if work was published before 1900, has different versions in different countries or is a rare book.


In-text: (Christoph 79)

8.7 Citing a Book Review

8.7.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year, Month of Publication if available). [Review of the book Title of reviewed work, by Author of reviewed work Initials Last Name]. Name of Journal, volume, page range. doi: xx.xxxxxx.


In-text: (Paul, 2006)

8.7.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. Review of Title of Reviewed Work, by Author of Reviewed Work First Last. Name of Journal volume, no. issue (Year): page range.

CHAPTER 8. CITATIONS

Notes. First appearance.¹ Consecutive appearances.² Nonconsecutive appearances.³

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.7.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Review (if any). Review of Title of Reviewed Work, by Author of Reviewed Work. Name of Journal vol. volume issue, no. issue number, Year, pp. page range.


In-text: (Paul 370)

8.8 Citing a Print Journal Article

8.8.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Year of publication). Title of article. Name of Journal, volume(issue), page range.


In-text: (Mann, 2011)

8.8.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Name of Journal volume, no. issue (Year of publication): page range.

² Ibid., 371.
³ Paul, review of Civilizing Natures, 370.

Notes. First appearance.\(^1\) Consecutive appearances.\(^2\) Nonconsecutive appearances.\(^3\)

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.8.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Name of Journal, vol. volume number, no. issue number, Publication date, pp. page range.


In-text: (Mann 10)

8.9 Citing a Journal Article from an Online Database

8.9.1 APA

Note: APA does not require that you include database information in citations because databases change over time. If you are using an article from a database that you need to cite using APA, here’s what to do:

Author Last Name, Initials. (Date of publication). Title of article. Periodical Title, Volume, no. issue, Page range. Retrieved from doi OR URL (accessed access date)


\(^2\)Ibid., 6.

\(^3\)Mann, “Pioneers of U.S. Ecofeminism,” 10–15.
In-text: (Mann 2011, p. 10)

8.9.2 Chicago

Note: If no DOI is available, use a stable URL.
Author Last Name, First Name. “Article Title.” Periodical Title Volume, no. issue (Date of publication): Page range, accessed access date. doi OR URL

8.9.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Work.” Name of Journal, vol. volume number, no. issue number, Date of publication, pp. page range. Name of Database, doi: DOI code
In-text: (Mann 10)

8.10 Citing a Website

8.10.1 APA

APA does not provide a formal citation for citing websites.

8.10.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Website (leave unitalicized unless the title of the website is also the title of a book or periodical). Sponsor. Date of publication or date updated (if none, give date accessed). URL.
Notes. First appearance.  
Consecutive appearances.  
Nonconsecutive appearances.  
If no known author is provided, begin the citation with the title of the website.

8.10.3 MLA

8.10.3.1 Citing a Website with human author

Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Website. Name of Publisher, Date of publication (if available), URL. Accessed date.


In-Text: (Martin)

8.10.3.2 Website with organization as author

Organization. Title of Website. Abbreviation of sponsor of site, Date updated. Medium. Date of access: day month year.


In-Text: (University of Puget Sound)

For a website with no known author, begin the citation with the title of the website.

For a website with no known title, use a description such as “Main page” instead of a title.

8.11 Citing a Work From a Website

8.11.1 APA

Author last name, initials. Title of Work. (Publication Year, Month Day). Title of Website. Retrieved from url.

---


2Ibid.

3Martin, Martin’s Microbial Menagerie.
In-text: (Ausubel, 2013)

8.11.2 Chicago

Author last name, first name. “Title of Work.” Title of Website. Publication/modification Month Day, Year. URL.

Notes. First appearance.\(^1\) Consecutive appearances.\(^2\) Nonconsecutive appearances.\(^3\)
For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.11.3 MLA

Author last name, First Name. “Title of Work.” Title of Website, Name of Publisher, Date of publication (if available), URL. Accessed access date.
For a work with no known author from a website, begin the citation with the title of the work.
In-Text: (Ausubel)

8.12 Citing a Online Newspaper

8.12.1 APA


---
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ausubel, “Fiction: “Poppyseed.””
In-text: (Wells, 2016)

8.12.2 Chicago


Notes. First appearance.1 Consecutive appearances.2 Nonconsecutive appearances.3

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.12.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Title of Newspaper. Publication month day, year, URL.

In-text: (Wells)

8.13 Citing an Entry in an Encyclopedia

8.13.1 APA

Author 1 Last Name, Initials., & Author 2 Last Name, Initials. (Publication year). Title of entry. In Editor Initials Editor Last Name (Ed.), Encyclopedia Name. (Vol. volume number, page range). City of Publication: Publisher.

2Ibid.
3Wells, “Pasquale Jones Brings a Little Novelty to Little Italy.”
In-text: (Hashimoto & Haga, 2009)

8.13.2 Chicago

Author 1 Last Name, First Name, and Author 2 First Name Last Name. “Title of Article.” In *Encyclopedia Name*. Volume number. Edited by Editor 1 First Name Last Name, Editor 2 First Name Last Name, and Editor 3 First Name Last Name. City of Publication: Publisher, Publication year.

Notes. First appearance. Consecutive appearances. Nonconsecutive appearances. For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.13.3 MLA

Author Last Name, First Name “Title of Article.” *Encyclopedia Name*. Edited by First Name Last Name. edition number ed. (if applicable), vol. Volume number Publisher, Year.
In-text: (Hashimoto and Haga)

8.14 Citing a Lecture or Speech

---

2Ibid.
3Hashimoto and Haga, “G. Protein-Coupled Receptor.”
8.14.1 APA
Lecturer Last Name, Initials. (Year, Month). Title of lecture. Medium presented at the Conference Name, City, State/Country.
In-text: (O’Neil, 2016)

8.14.2 Chicago
Lecturer Last Name, First Name. “Title of Lecture.” Medium at conference location, city, state/country. Month day, year.

Notes. First appearance.¹ Consecutive appearances.² Nonconsecutive appearances.³
For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.14.3 MLA
Lecturer Last Name, First Name. “Title of Lecture.” Title of particular conference or meeting. Organization Name, Date day month year, Venue, City*. Type of presentation.
*Omit the city if part of venue name.
In-text: (O’Neil)

²Ibid.
³O’Neil, “Talking Small, Thinking Big.”
8.15 Citing a Film

8.15.1 APA


In-text: (Barmettler, 2015)

8.15.2 Chicago

Actor 1 Last Name, First Name, and Actor 2 First Name Last Name. Title of Film. Format. Directed by Director First Name Last Name. Year of original release; city, state/country: Distributor, distribution year.


Notes. First appearance.¹ Consecutive appearances.² Nonconsecutive appearances.³

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.15.3 MLA

Creator Last Name, First Name (if applicable), Title of Film or Video. Role of other contributors and their First Name Last Name, Version (if applicable), Publisher, Publication date.


In-text: (Iñárritu)²

---

²Ibid.
³Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hardy, The Revenant.
8.16 Citing a Music Performance

8.16.1 APA

APA does not provide a formal citation for music performances.

8.16.2 Chicago

Author of performed work Last Name, First Name. Title of performed work. Cond. Conductor First Name Last Name. Location, city, state/country, date of performance.


Notes. First appearance.1 Consecutive appearances.2 Nonconsecutive appearances.3

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.16.3 MLA

Note: With performances, you may want to emphasize different elements, perhaps the composer, or perhaps the performing group. Depending on your focus, here are two possible approaches.

Writer Last Name, First Name. Title of work performed. Date of performance. City, Theater.

Beethoven, Ludwig van. Symphony No. 9. 29 July 2016, Tacoma, Schneebeck Concert Hall.

Performer Last Name, First Name. Title of work performed, by Composer First Name Last Name. Date of performance, City, Theater.

University of Puget Sound Symphony Orchestra. Symphony No. 9, by Ludwig van Beethoven. 29 July 2016, Tacoma, Schneebeck Concert Hall.

In-text: (Beethoven) or (University of Puget Sound Symphony Orchestra)

---

1L. Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, conducted by Wesley Schultz, Schneebeck Concert Hall, Tacoma, Wa, July 29, 2016.
2Ibid.
3L. Beethoven, Symphony No. 9.
8.17 Citing a Music Recording

8.17.1 APA


In-Text: (Hornsby, 2004)

8.17.2 Chicago

Artist Last Name, First Name. “Title of Work.” Album. Manufacturer Number of Recording, Year, medium.


Notes. First appearance.¹
For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.17.3 MLA

Artist Last Name, First Name. “Title of Recording.” Album. Manufacturer, Year of publication. Medium.


In-Text: (Hornsby)

8.18 Citing an Artwork

8.18.1 APA

Artist Last Name, Initials. (Year of composition). Title of work [medium of composition]. City: Institution.


In-Text: (di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, 1504)

8.18.2 Chicago

Artist Last Name, First Name. Title of work. Medium, date of composition. Institution, City, State/Country.


For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.18.3 MLA

8.18.3.1 Artwork viewed in person

Artist Last Name, First Name. Title of work. Year of composition, Institution, City.


In-Text: (di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni)

¹Michelangelo, David, Carrara marble sculpture, 1504, Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze, Florence, Italy.
²Ibid.
³di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, David.
8.18.3.2 Artwork viewed online

Artist Last Name, First Name. Title of work. Year of composition. Title of website, Name of Publisher (if different than Name of website), URL.


In-text: (di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni)

8.19 Citing a Government Document

8.19.1 APA


8.19.2 Chicago


Notes. First appearance.¹ Nonconsecutive appearances.²

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

8.19.3 MLA

Government entity that is author. Title of document. Edition if given and is not First edition, Publisher, Publication date. URL.

²U.S. EPA, Climate Change, 36.

In-Text: (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

### 8.20 Citing a Graphic Novel

#### 8.20.1 APA

Author 1 Last Name, Initials, & Author 2 Last Name, Initials. (Year). *Title of work.* City, State/Country: Publisher.


In-Text: (Moore & Gibbons, 1986, p. 1)

#### 8.20.2 Chicago

Author 1 Last Name, First Name, and Author 2 First Name Last Name. *Title of work, vol. number.* (Publisher: Date of publication), page range.


Notes. First appearance.\(^1\) Nonconsecutive appearances.\(^2\)

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

#### 8.20.3 MLA

Main author Last Name, First Name, abbreviated role. *Title of work.* Art by other contributor’s First Name Last Name. Publisher, Year.


Note: With graphic novels when the art and the writing are by different people, you should cite the contributor first whose work is the focus of your analysis, as in


In-Text: (Moore 1)

### 8.21 Citing a Translation

![Image](image.png)

#### 8.21.1 APA

Author Last Name, Initials. (Date). *Title of work* (Translator Initials Last Name, Trans.). City of publication: Publisher. (Original work published Y ear of original work publication).


In-Text: (Shikibu, 2001)

#### 8.21.2 Chicago

Author Last Name, First Name. *Title of work*. Translated by Translator First Name Last Name. City of publication: Publisher, Date.


**Notes.** First appearance.¹ Nonconsecutive appearances.²

For more information about how to insert footnotes, see Subsection 12.1.2.

#### 8.21.3 MLA

**8.21.3.1 If emphasizing work and original author**

Author Last Name, First Name. *Title of work*. Trans. by Translator First Name Last Name. Publisher, Date of publication.

   In-Text: (Shikibu)

8.21.3.2 If emphasizing translation and translator (less common, and only if translation itself is being examined)

Translator Last Name, First Name, translator. *Title of work*. By Author First Name Last Name. Publisher, Date.
   In-Text: (Tyler)
Chapter 9

Speaking and Writing

The previous eight chapters have focused on writing and research. While writing and researching are important academic skills, speaking is equally important. Spoken and written arguments are in many ways the same: both articulate positions in an assertive voice, both are organized according to purpose, and both present evidence based on the expectations of an audience. The main difference between spoken and written arguments is not what your ideas are but how you convey them.

Spoken arguments are conveyed in real time; as a student, you know this difference all too well. Consider which of the following scenarios is scarier: (1) You zone out for a couple of paragraphs before you have to respond to a couple of comprehension questions; (2) you’re in lecture and zone out for a few slides, but your professor calls on you to answer a question in class. Of course, the second scenario is scarier! That’s because, whereas you can reread a passage that you missed, it’s difficult to re-consult a lecture occurring in real time. As you prepare oral presentations, keep this difference in mind. Because your audience will not be able to review if they get lost or distracted, it is important to give your listeners some comprehension wiggle room:

Use simple vocabulary and sentence structure Since your audience won’t be able to re-hear the sentences you speak or look up the words you use in a dictionary, make everyone’s life easier by speaking in accessible language and adopting a conversational tone.

Give your presentation a clear introduction, body, and conclusion This structure will not only help to keep your listeners engaged, but it will also give your presentation an audience-friendly, narrative quality.

Use pauses and transitions to explain relationships between ideas Pauses act like paragraph breaks—they signal to your audience that you are shifting ideas or advancing in your argument. Transitional statements (such as “The second point to consider is _______” and “While _______ is important to consider, even more important is _______”) guide your audience through your spoken argument.

Use clean, clear, and high-quality visuals Think about how hard it is to follow along in class when a professor lectures without visuals. Help your audience by providing them with interesting visuals that will help them follow as you speak. Just make sure your visuals don’t distract from your message. Also, keep in mind that your visuals are of no use to your audience if they can’t see them. Use images that are large and of sufficient resolution to be seen from any distance.
Repeat! Since your audience won’t be able to pause and go back over previous material as they would be able to while reading a written argument, it’s important that you provide them this opportunity by reminding your audience of the main parts of your argument and—especially—of parts that may be too complex to grasp at first glance.

Be explicit! (No, not that kind of explicit!) Explicitly state the connections between the parts of your argument and your thesis. Here, visual cues referring the reader back to relevant parts of your presentation can be helpful.

To illustrate how one might go about transforming a written argument into a spoken one, take a look at these two paragraphs. The first paragraph comes from an academic paper written by a Puget Sound student, and the second makes the same argument in language appropriate for an oral presentation. Notice that, though they contain the same information and make the same argument, each paragraph does so differently.

**Written.**

As a result of the increasing majoritarian agitation within American politics, many states began to reexamine their constitutions in order to better incorporate the desires of the common majority. One issue addressed within this field of political reform was the concept of universal male suffrage. Currently, the vote was extended to adult white males who owned land. Some statesmen wanted to extend suffrage to all adult white males regardless of their economic circumstances. George S. Camp articulated one of the most concise arguments in favor of universal male suffrage in 1841, in his book *Democracy*. For Camp, the right to vote was a natural right, attributed to men by the right of being human. He states, “All should have an equal voice in the public deliberations of the state, however unequal the point of circumstances, since human rights, by virtue of which alone we are entitled to vote at all, are the attributes of the man, not of his circumstances” (145). This statement neatly summarizes Camp’s belief that the right to vote is a natural human right, irrespective of any economic condition. It also implies that because every man had the right to vote despite their economic circumstances, no class had a greater stake in the government than another. Camp argues, “Property is merely the subject on which rights are exercised ... We all have our rights, and no man has anything more” (146). For Camp, the economic situation of any human being was an “accident of fortune” and was of “true comparative insignificance” compared with the importance of “real attributes,” or natural rights, such as the right to vote; no man should be kept from exercising his rights because of his lack of economic prosperity.

That paragraph is difficult enough to read! Imagine trying to understand its argument if you could only listen to it. Enter this listener-friendly version.

**Spoken.**

In nineteenth century America, only white male landowners could vote. There was considerable political unrest because the majority of people felt that their voices had not been heard, so states began to reexamine their constitutions. One major solution to this problem was universal
male suffrage, which in this case meant that all white males could vote, regardless of landownership.

One proponent of universal male suffrage, George S. Camp, argued that the right to vote is a natural human right. Camp insisted that economic circumstances don’t affect a person’s natural right to vote. He called people’s ownership of property an exercise of rights, which means that all people have rights and nothing more. [pause] According to Camp, people in higher classes shouldn’t have a greater stake in government because all that people have are their rights.

In length alone, the spoken version is shorter. By simplifying sentence structure and vocabulary, the spoken version is much more easily understandable. The speaker is patient with their explanations and clarifies things for the audience (“which in this case meant that all white males could vote”). By understanding the limits of aural processing, you can tailor your oral presentation to the needs of your audience and create, in so doing, a more pleasant experience for all.

We have considered some of the differences between spoken and written communication and suggested some strategies to negotiate them. Understanding these differences will help you to take advantage of the real time, face-to-face context of oral communication. Here are some general tips to help you make the most of your presentation:

**Prepare ahead of time** Even if you consider yourself to be a great improviser, you should begin preparing your presentation **at least** a couple of days in advance to give yourself time to ...

**Practice!** Practicing your presentation **over and over** will help you feel more confident and comfortable when the time comes for you to actually present. We know that practicing speeches in college can sometimes be difficult, especially when you don’t want to bother your roommate, but you have plenty of options! Try out a study room in the basement of Collins Library, find an empty lounge in your residence hall, take turns practicing with other people in your class (or with your course assistant), make an appointment at the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLTL), take your presentation notes on a walk and practice as you go (just watch out for cars and passersby!), or visit your professor during office hours for some feedback. Having a few run-throughs under your belt will make you more comfortable when you actually present.

**Don’t over-prepare** Of course, don’t prepare so much that your presentation becomes all that you think about. It’s important to sleep and take breaks!

**Don’t read; speak** The purpose of a presentation is not to read the audience your paper. Your audience can read. What they can’t do when reading a written paper is engage in face-to-face communication with the writer. Engage your listeners on a personal level by actually talking to them. They’ll be more interested in what you have to say, and you’ll be happy to have been heard. (You might even be able to get away with a couple of jokes in your oral presentation. While we don’t recommend undermining your authority with knock-knock jokes every other slide, a tasteful joke can help to establish rapport between you and your audience.)

**Make eye contact** Although it might seem scary to look directly at your audience, making eye contact will actually make the presentation less
awkward! Making eye contact also tells your audience that you recipro-
cate the attention that they’re giving you.

Assume good intent  Sometimes people in your audience may look like they
are not paying attention or like they aren’t enjoying your presentation.
While this may be the case, don’t panic if people look less than enthralled.
It’s impossible to know why they look the way they do: They may have
been sitting there for a long time, or maybe their resting face is not as
perky and interested as your own! That said, when you’re in the audience
listening to other presentations, make an extra effort to be a good listener
and to look interested and alert, even if you’ve been sitting there for a
long time.

Remember that class presentations are learning experiences  Class pre-
sentations, as with everything you do in college, are practice. Your class-
mates are dealing with the same stresses and anxieties as you, and your
professor is aware that you are practicing and learning. If it helps, ask
your professor if you can use the timer on your phone to keep track of
time during your presentation. (But don’t do this if watching the seconds
tick by will make you more anxious!)

Just breathe and relax, and it will be all right.

Top 5 differences between written and spoken (or signed!)
language.

1. The obvious difference (excluding the modern inventions of
radio, telephones, and television): written language allows
people to communicate across time and space, while spo-
ken language happens immediately and is available only for
those who can hear it (or see it, in the case of sign lan-
guages).

2. Virtually every human being learns to speak, while literacy
is far less common. Today, almost 17% of adults around the
world are illiterate.

3. Because reading and writing are consciously learned behav-
iors while the ability to speak is acquired naturally, many
scientists and linguists think that spoken language is innate
and written language is a human construct.

4. Spoken and signed languages can have varieties and dialects,
while written language is generally more regulated and stan-
dardized.

5. Writing and speaking appear to use different parts of the
brain.

Differences in Dialectal/Cultural Rules.  Communication extends far
beyond the grammatical features used by a speaker or writer.  A person’s
grammar may be technically correct, but the meaning of their words can pro-
voke anger, laughter, misunderstanding, or outright confusion. Since language
revolves around context, knowing the context in which you speak or write is es-
sential to producing culturally appropriate messages. In linguistics, the study
of these cultural and contextual language rules is called **pragmatics**.

Consider this example: You’ve decided to take your six-year-old cousin
to the park for a picnic. You notice that a woman nearby is very pregnant.
Your cousin also notices the person’s large belly and decides to walk up to her
and say, “Wow! You must have eaten a lot of treats!” Although your cousin’s
sentence is grammatically correct, they have made the significant English prag-
matic mistake of talking about someone’s body and consumption. Maybe your
young cousin heard their parent say this same sentence to the robust family dog
but has not yet learned that speaking to humans in such a way is inappropriate.

Another example would be one of pragmatic differences between languages:
a Caribbean student studying in the United States turns in a narrative and
receives a low grade. The teacher’s comments point to the sequence of events
within the narrative. However, what the teacher sees as unorganized and
illogical is actually a culturally distinct method of storytelling that is different
from the standard method **Standard American English** uses.

Here are some more pragmatic facts:

- Other examples of pragmatic knowledge include knowing how and when
to take turns speaking, make eye contact, and ask questions.

- Other types of pragmatic knowledge include contributing relevant infor-
mation to a conversation that is not redundant and adjusting the type
of language based on the conversational situation.

- Things like eye contact, head nodding, personal space, and amount of
 touching are also part of the pragmatics of a language and vary by lan-
guage and culture.

- There are three main aspects of communication that are essential to
understanding the pragmatic situation of a conversation: 1) the literal
meaning of what was spoken (locution), 2) the speaker’s intentions (illo-
cution), and 3) the listener’s interpretation (perlocution).

- Pragmatics is one major reason why it has been so difficult to program
computers to speak and understand language. Try telling a robot to
“crack a window,” and see what happens!
Chapter 10

Strategies for Academic Success

By the time you’re reading this, you’ve probably been at Puget Sound long enough to realize that college looked easier on paper than it has turned out to be. Taking only four classes at a time and only being in class twelve hours a week sounded great, but it sounded great because seeing college on paper didn’t show you how much work you’d have to do outside of class, how many other activities you’d want to get involved in, and how much less structured your life would be than it was in high school. This freedom and independence is one of the things that makes college such an awesome experience and such a great chance to grow as a person, but it also takes some adapting to, and most graduating seniors could tell you a story off the top of their heads about how they didn’t manage their time, got disorganized, or said something inappropriate to a professor or another student in the midst of some unforeseen college calamity.

Sometimes, it will feel like your life is falling apart around you. We don’t know a single college student who hasn’t had moments that were incredibly hard, emotionally as much as intellectually, in the course of their time at Puget Sound. Maybe assignments are late. Maybe a friend or family member has needed your help with life-stuff. Maybe your own personal health, mental or physical, is making school difficult. Maybe it’s just been raining and grey outside for a week straight and you’re tired of being cold and wet every time you leave your room. College is exciting in new, unique ways, but it’s also difficult in new, unique ways. New challenges require new approaches, and though we can’t say how to fix everything, chapter provides baseline suggestions for how to manage your time, stay organized, and talk to professors, especially when life gets hard.

10.1 Talking to Professors

10.1.1 The New Student-Teacher Relationship

College is different from high school in lots of ways, but one of the most important changes that is easy to miss is in the relationship between you and your teachers. In high school, your teachers were proactive so that you could be reactive. This means that your teachers made sure that you knew what homework was due the next day, let you know when you hadn’t turned in an
assignment, and checked in when you missed class. They initiated action, and you just had to respond. In college, you are expected to be proactive, and your professors will be reactive. This means that if you don’t understand course material, get behind on assignments, or miss class, it’s up to you to turn in assignments on time, show up to class, and learn course material. This new freedom is a good chance to develop independence and run your own life, but it can also be dangerous if you’re not aware of your new responsibility to take responsibility for your own learning and progress.

You have a different set of responsibilities and roles as a college student than you did as a high school student, and college professors similarly have a different set of responsibilities and roles than your high school teachers did. Teaching high school is a demanding job, but high school teachers are primarily teachers, which is to say that 95% of their time at work is spent focused on students. College professors are expected to be good teachers, especially at a liberal arts school like the University of Puget Sound, but they are expected also to be scholars who create and publish new knowledge and committee members who help run the university. Finally, college professors work with adult students, and they don’t want to treat students as incapable youth any more than students want to be treated as incapable youth.

10.1.2 Your Secret Weapon

We wanted to explain the parts of professors’ lives that you probably haven’t thought about because it’s important context for understanding their many roles, their jobs as your teachers, and how you can relate to them respectfully and productively. That being said, professors are here to teach you and every other student in their class, and they want to do that to the best of their ability while balancing their other responsibilities.

Making a request of a professor can be difficult, especially while you’re still adapting to a new student-teacher dynamic, and oftentimes when a student says something disrespectful to a professor, or visa versa, it’s because of a lack of thoughtfulness or understanding, not a willful malevolence. Fortunately, professors give you a secret weapon you can use when you need to make a request. It’s called a syllabus. Most students don’t recognize the power of the syllabus because syllabi in high school (if you even had them) tend not to be as informative as syllabi in college. In college, by contrast, there are many good reasons to read the syllabus.

Reading the syllabus can tell you ...

- How your professor likes to be addressed
- The best way to contact your professor
- The times that your professor offers office hours
- The professor’s (or department’s) policy on extensions and late work
- The professor’s (or department’s) policy on what constitutes cheating and what forms of collaboration are allowed
- How they will calculate your grade
- When assignments are due
- What materials you need for the course

Now there’s a magical day at the beginning of the semester called “syllabus day” where everyone goes to class and just does nothing! How amazing!
Just kidding! The truth is, of course, that syllabus day is important. Professors reserve an *entire day* of class to go over the syllabus because they *expect* students to know their policies and assignment due dates.

### 10.1.3 Making Requests

Professors are amazing resources, which is why it can be so tempting to shoot off a quick email asking if they know of any good sources for your next paper or if they can send you notes for the day of class that you missed. But communicating with professors in a way that’s respectful and effective requires that you think a little bit more about what you’re asking for. One of the the best rules of thumb for interacting with professors is to *do as much work ahead of time as you’re about to ask the professor to do for you*. If you still need help after taking the steps you should, explain to the professor what you’ve already done, and ask for something specific. This both lets them know that you’ve been proactive in meeting your needs, but also gives them a really specific action they can take to help you.

**Example 10.1.1 Missing Class.** For example, instead of this:

Hi professor, I was hoping you could send me your notes for the class I missed yesterday. Did we do anything important?

try saying:

Hi professor, I met up with Shannon and got their notes from yesterday since I stayed home sick and missed class. They told me you announced our next paper and put the prompt on Moodle, but after looking over the prompt, I realized I’m not sure what it means to “reconstruct the author’s argument *without* summarizing.” This seems like a really subtle distinction to me: do you mean I should use the same evidence as the author to make the same claim? How is it possible to reconstruct an argument without just saying what the article says? I know you don’t have office hours tomorrow, but I’d like to get started as soon as possible since, as you know, I’ll be away for soccer this weekend. I was hoping I could come by your office for 15 minutes tomorrow to get a clearer picture of what you’re looking for. I’m free before 11 am and from 2 - 3:30 pm.

Check Your Bias.

Most students feel more comfortable asking for extensions, favors, or help from *some* faculty members that they wouldn’t ask for from *other* professors. One thing that might not cross your mind *but should* is why that is. It might be that you have great rapport with a professor you know well and you’re sure that it’ll be fine. But it’s *also* possible that your professor’s identity plays a role in what you think a professor will do for you because implicit bias affects all of our decisions if we’re not careful. Academia operates within broader societal structures (not to mention the ones it creates in addition), and as such most of us are less likely to challenge the policy of professors who are male, white, older, or have been teaching a long time. These aren’t the only identity factors
that play a role in how you might see a professor, but they’re worth considering. Think twice about how your professors’ identities influence how you see their responsibility to you, and you can help dismantle the identity-based power structures in academia!

It’s impossible to write a guide on “how to ask any professor for anything in any context,” so rather than even attempting that, we’d like to leave off this section and preface the next section with a few tips that are true in any scenario.

The Eternal Truths of Making Requests.

**Kindness** Treat professors like people who deserve respect.

**Syllabus-awareness** Know the policy on your request. Are you asking for something that they offer to anyone? Are you asking for something that’s not on the syllabus? Are you asking for something that it says they specifically don’t allow? Knowing a professor’s policy is doubly useful because it (1) helps you decide how to frame your request, and (2) shows the professor that you know what you’re doing and informed yourself about their rules.

**Thoughtfulness** Show the professor how you’ve taken responsibility for your situation and what you’ve already tried to do. Show the professor why they’re the right person for you to go to next, and don’t ask one professor for something that you wouldn’t ask another professor for just because you think they’re a pushover.

10.1.4 Asking for an Extension

One of the most common interactions that you may have with a professor that can still be difficult to navigate is asking for an extension on an assignment. This is difficult for a few reasons, but mostly it’s difficult because your perspective and the professor’s perspective can differ so much, and understanding these differences can help you ask for what you need in a more thoughtful (and hopefully, successful) way. First of all, you could have lots of reasons for asking for an extension. Maybe there was a family emergency. Maybe you have a lot of other work to do the same day. Maybe you’ve been stuck in bed sick. Maybe you just didn’t plan quite right and started too late. Often, asking for an extension is not planned, but happens as a panicked response to a scenario you didn’t want to be in in the first place. Professors know that there are good reasons to ask for an extension, but they’ve also heard a lot of not good reasons for asking for an extension.

What might feel catastrophic or unusual in your life is probably something that your professor has heard from another student before. They know that being a student is really tough and that life falls apart sometimes. Everyone gets sick and has to deal with emergencies sometimes. Getting an extension is often better than turning in a partially complete assignment, but when you ask for an extension, think about how what you say will come across to your professor. They’ve received too many emails that start with “Hey, I’m really
really busy and I have a lot of work to do for my other classes, and I was hoping I could get an extension on your assignment.” They might believe and empathize with you, but because the assignment you’re falling behind on has probably been on their syllabus the entire semester, they’re just going to think that you planned poorly and now are asking them to accommodate that poor planning. So how should you ask?

There are a few rules to follow when asking for an extension:

- **It is ALWAYS better to ask permission to turn in an assignment late than for forgiveness for having already done so, and it is best to ask as far in advance as possible.** This proactive step gives you lots of time to work out a new arrangement with the professor and communicates to the professor that you are thinking ahead and have read their syllabus.

- **Think about who else your late work might affect.** Turning in late work will almost certainly require that your professor deal with it separately, but it may also impact other students if you ask to take a test or give a presentation on a different day.

- **Check the syllabus and know the professor’s policy on late work and extensions, which can vary drastically by discipline and professor.**

- **With the last point in mind, know whether you are asking for the professor to make an exception to their policy or not and …**

- **If you’re asking the professor for something that’s generally not allowed by their policy, give them an out by saying that you recognize that they might not be able to give you what you’re asking for.** Giving the professor an easy way to reject you may sound counterproductive, but it really makes you seem more reasonable and understanding.

- **If you know you can’t get an assignment in on time but it’s entirely your fault and you know it, be honest about it.** Like most people, professors respond far better to people who are being genuine than they do to people who come up with a flimsy reason for why they haven’t been able to get something in on time.

### 10.1.5 To Send or not to Send

A large portion of the communication that you have with professors will be over email, which means that knowing how to write emails to professors is both useful as a skill in itself and transferrable to talking with professors in-person. Before we dive into some example emails, try considering KNOL[these tips] on email etiquette.

**Example 10.1.2**
• Don’t be too casual until you know that it’s okay to be casual. This means using a professor’s name rather than starting with “Hey” and generally trying to spell words correctly and use full sentences.

• Be clear and brief. Nobody wants to read long, confusing emails (or anything else that’s long and confusing).

• As with making requests, don’t ask the professor to do more work in responding than you’ve already done to send the email.

• Use your Puget Sound email address

![Figure 10.1.3: Sorry I missed class](image)

Example 10.1.4
Professors have different preferences and policies on what they consider respectful or acceptable communication, and often, it’s easy to be familiar or informal with Puget Sound professors because they are approachable, kind, and often genuinely interested in knowing and talking with their students. Depending on the professor, being addressed informally or having a student ask them for an exception to a rule might not bother them at all; however, they’re also professionals, which means that even if they are annoyed, they might not tell you. Nevertheless, if a student does something that they perceive as disrespectful many times, intentionally or otherwise, they may start to associate the student with negative interactions, which isn’t good for anyone!

10.2 Time Management

Time management is a lot like juggling. In part, it’s like juggling because keeping track of homework due dates, meeting times, and everything else you have going on in your life is inherently difficult; but it’s also like juggling because the process itself is a perpetually active endeavor that requires constant attention and adjustments. Successful time management is a three step process. First, you have to plan your time well. Second, you have to execute your plan well. Finally, you have to pay attention to which parts of the plan weren’t realistic, which parts of execution didn’t go right, and how you can avoid a future mishap. This process is iterative and continuous, so you have to be thinking about how yesterday’s plan went, executing today’s plan, and creating tomorrow’s plan all at the same time. Toss one ball, pass the second from one hand to the other, and catch the third ball. Do it over and over again. When someone makes a mistake juggling, they don’t usually just drop one ball. Failing to do any one step is usually immediately followed by a failure to do any of the steps, and in this respect again it is like time management.
Before we get into strategies for planning time, it’s worth pausing to talk about using time well, and in particular its worth talking about why we don’t use our time well. Time management requires effort and commitment, and having a reason to commit time and energy to the process makes it easier to create and stick to good habits, especially when they’re difficult at first. So let’s talk about procrastination.

10.2.1 Good Ol’ Procrastination

Probably the most common challenge that most students (and people) face in managing time is procrastination. Procrastination is often associated with laziness, but really it’s more of a question of facing the fear of starting something. Starting something is especially hard (and therefore procrastination most likely) when the task is important to us or difficult to undertake. Harder still is when the task is vague or involves many steps. For this reason, we tend to procrastinate most on our most difficult, abstract tasks that have the greatest impact on our life. How irritating! We can have a huge weight hanging over us (like a research paper, take-home test, or class presentation), but rather than chip away at one of those projects, it’s easier for us to do a well-defined reading for a class, finish a problem set, or simply stew in our misery, squandering our time on our favorite website or social media platform.

The key thing to note about procrastination is that it results from not knowing how to approach the terrifying scale of an important, abstract project. Only at the last minute, when our mind accepts that we might fail a class if we don’t start in on the project that’s worth 20% of our grade, do we rally to rush through the assignment before its due. The “last-minuteness” of our work forces us to compromise and make decisions as we go, and most importantly, it means that if we do poorly on an assignment, it’s not because we lacked intelligence, knowledge, or skills, it’s because we waited until the last minute. Our decision-making capabilities, not our identity, is at stake.

Putting our heart into a task (like homework) and then hearing from someone we look up to (like a professor) say that it’s not very good can be an awful feeling, so we protect ourselves by simply not giving ourselves the time to put
our heart into our work. This attitude is easy to adopt, especially when we get feedback like that we’re just “not good at math” or “don’t have a way with words” or “are lazy.” These labels are damaging because they send the message that we ARE failures rather than that we have failed to show our best work. College assignments will probably ask most of us to do things that demand that we use skills that we believe we lack; to avoid letting an assignment (or the grade we get on an assignment) be yet another permanent mark of our inferiority, we procrastinate so that we can attribute any undesirable outcome not to our own failings, but to our circumstances.

This cycle is difficult to break, but one of the most important things to remember is that procrastination almost always diminishes the quality of our work.

Note.

This doesn’t mean that as soon as we stop procrastinating, we sail through college with easy A’s--quite the contrary. Not procrastinating lets us focus on the thing we came to college to do: we can start improving our skills by giving ourselves time to produce a true rough draft, get help from peers or professors when we’re stuck, and generally **learn from our assignments** rather than **fear what they will reveal about us**.

10.2.2 Productive Procrastination

Procrastination is especially easy when there’s an easily accessible distraction we can use to put off work. Some of the most common distractions are social media, imageboard websites, phone or computer games, TV, and socializing. Sometimes, though, the tasks we perform to procrastinate **seem** important, and this is called **productive procrastination**. Symptoms of productive procrastination include cleaning, doing less-intimidating homework, sending emails, or otherwise taking care of day-to-day tasks that **are important** but that are clearly **not urgent**. One way of assessing whether you’re allocating your time well is to use a the flowchart below. If there’s anything on your plate that falls into the top box, **do that first**. The hard part to remember is **to do the middle box after that**. The categorization into urgent and not urgent is useful, but the nature of time means that anything that’s important and not urgent will soon be both important and urgent! Not procrastinating means taking care of stuff in the middle box whenever you can, especially **before** it moves into the top box. Thinking in terms of both importance and urgency is a good way to stay out of the trap of feeling productive by doing less important or less urgent work.
- Work on citations
- Take the cwlt’s BuzzFeed quiz to figure out what kind of writer you are!
- Type up your notes/evidence
- Make to-do lists
- Make an assignment timeline
- Organize your documents/make a folder for your research
- Look at classes for next semester
- Make a good essay-writing playlist on Spotify
- Go to the sub or The Cellar, and get something healthy but good to snack on
- There’s a huge “study” genre on YouTube. Go watch a couple videos to get inspired!
- Make some coffee/tea to get you in the (writing) mood
- Explore and familiarize yourself with the Sound Writing online guidebook (good job!)
- Make a writing appointment at the cwlt!

**List 10.2.1:** Productive Procrastination Practices

### 10.2.3 Procrastination vs. Self-Care

Good time management is a form of self-care because it makes it possible to balance activities and commitments that you care about without compromising your mental, physical, and emotional health. Because it’s easy to associate *not* doing work with procrastination, it can be difficult to tell the difference between taking a necessary mental break and procrastinating. So what’s the difference?

**Self Care vs. Procrastination**

- Self-care is crucial; procrastination activities are not. It’s the difference between getting enough sleep versus making time for a Netflix episode. If you’re not making time for the baseline things you need to be healthy (physically, mentally, and emotionally), chances are the extra “fun” things you are creating time for aren’t self-care, but procrastination.

- Each of us will have different ways of “recharging our batteries” but the point of self-care is that it DOES recharge and rejuvenate—procrastination sucks energy and leaves guilt. Check yourself: do you actually feel rejuvenated after your break, or do you feel worse about yourself than when you started?
Trying to do things that “recharge your batteries” rather than that leave you feeling guilty about your break is a good way to decide whether a non-work activity is an important break. If you’re probably going to be in a better mental, physical, or emotional state to be productive after you take a break to do something, chances are it’s self-care, not procrastination.

General rules for self-care.

• %Get the sleep you need!
  Sleeping 6 hours or less a night on a regular basis has similar effects on cognition as the kind of sleep deprivation that is routinely used for interrogation and torture. If you’re so sleepy you’d confess to a crime you didn’t commit, you’re in no shape to write a paper anyone wants to read.

• %Make time to eat well and exercise.
  Yes, even if you’re busy! You don’t have to be a gym rat—just take a walk!

• %Practice good “emotional hygiene” on a regular basis.
  Acknowledge and name your feelings as they happen, keep a journal, write a gratitude list, talk with a therapist, etc. Humans are emotional creatures, and recognizing those emotions and the impact they have on us is important—not just for our productivity, but for the rest of our lives as well.

• %Protect your schedule.
  Prioritize what you have to do, and then build in time for what you need to do for you first.

• %Be intentional about your self-care.
  When we’re stressed, we tend to do things mindlessly. Your time is valuable, so spend it on what matters.

10.2.4 Good Time Management

The root of time management is using time well, and using your time well requires understanding the time you have. Depending on how much you enjoy being organized already and how busy or unstructured your life is, you may already have a knack for figuring out what time of day you do your best work, when you have different amounts of free time, and a good sense of how long your work will take.

Understanding procrastination helps us identify strategies we can use to avoid it. In particular, breaking down an intimidating project early-on is an essential skill to have when approaching a daunting task. But how do you create good goals that will help you chip away at a big assignment? One way is to ensure that your goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound, or SMART for short. So if writing a lab-report is the intimidating project that you’re procrastinating on, writing a goal like “write lab report” in your planner is not especially useful. It’s not a sub-goal, and it doesn’t give you something specific to work on, so it’s far more likely to trigger the
“aaaaaaahhh that’s so much to do” reaction that’s likely to lead to procrastination. Let’s transform a few poorly formed goals into SMART goals.

**Get SMART.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original goal</th>
<th>SMART goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Write lab report.”</td>
<td>“Write intro and methods sections before 9 pm on Wednesday.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Study for Spanish test”</td>
<td>“Memorize 30 new Spanish vocab words for 1 hour on Tuesday after seminar.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stop procrastinating and write that essay”</td>
<td>“Leave phone at home, go to the library Monday morning for 3 hours, and write an outline and a list of evidence I’m going to use for my SOAN paper. I get TWO 5 minute breaks.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that some of these goals aren’t just about the goal itself; the last one, for example, addresses the environment in which you want to pursue your goal and what “anti-procrastination promises” you need to make to ensure that you can follow-through on your goal. If you break a large project into several goals that you can give yourself on several different days, you have to start far in advance of the due date, but you also make progress far ahead of the due date and have time to ask questions and improve your work as you go. You’ll produce a better final product, and achieving small goals along the way feels good!

### 10.2.5 Making and Using a Time Chart

All right. Approach big problems with small goals. Great. But how do you then follow through on those smaller goals? As you start breaking down your bigger projects, you’ll find the strategies that work well for you, and tweaking the strategies that we recommend here to be most effective for you is important!

That being said, one of the most tried-and-true approaches to managing daily work is the **time chart**. The point of a time chart is to give you an action plan for each day. It accounts for where you have to be when, but it also includes what work you’re going to do when. A time chart isn’t a planner or a calendar, but making a good time chart requires that you have a good sense of both what you need to do on a given day and what your time commitments are on a given day, which planners and calendars, respectively, help you keep track of. Finally, time charts are useful because they force you to assign priority to the tasks you want to accomplish.

So how should you use a time-chart? As is the case with everything we’ve discussed in the academic consulting section, everyone develops slight variations on the underlying strategies for staying organized and managing time, but the steps we lay out here are a great way to start if you’ve never made a time chart before. Many people like to use a paper planner, which is what we present first, but there are great digital options for making a time chart as well, such as Google Calendar. First, take a look at the CWLT time chart below. If you like what you see here, you can pick up a time charts like this one at the CWLT.
Time Chart. With your own time-chart in hand, fill it out following these guidelines and in this order:

- Add all of your classes for the week.
- Add your other fixed commitments, which could include sports or music practices, work, exercise, meals, club meetings, and appointments with friends or professors.
- Look at the time that’s left, and schedule in time to work on specific goals or assignments. Remember to …
  - Be realistic about how long each task is going to take. This will be easiest if you’ve briefly looked over assignments ahead of time to triage your workload. How long are each of those readings? How many problems are in the problem-set?
  - Remember those sub-goals. Better to give yourself 2 hours to write an outline for a paper than to give yourself 8 hours to write a paper.
  - Recognize that some time is “higher quality” than other time, and use it to do your highest-priority tasks. Four hours of work during the time of day when you’re most focused is probably a much better time to work on a challenging problem set than during a one hour break between difficult classes when you’re also hungry.
  - Make time for review. Our long-term memory will remember content best if you review it right as you start to forget what you’ve learned. Taking time at the end of the day to go over class notes and remember the highlights of what you learned is a great way to do high-quality review in a short amount of time.
  - Plan to plan. Schedule a time in your time chart when you’ll make a time chart for the next week. Time management and organization strategies are only useful if they’re consistent!

If you’re using a digital calendar (such as Google Calendar), the principles for setting up a time chart are the same as for a paper planner, but the digital platform offers KNOL[a few features] that are worth using as well.
Example 10.2.2

- Set recurring events for the commitments that don’t change week to week. This means that your school and work schedule (and maybe more) will show up every week without you having to write them down over and over.

- Take advantage of reminders. If meetings or homework assignments have a tendency to slip your mind, you can always turn on notifications on your phone or computer to remind you before you’re supposed to be meeting someone or working on something.

- Access your calendar/time chart from multiple platforms. If you have a smartphone, you can access your calendar from your phone as well as from any computer, which makes adding new commitments as you learn about them much easier.

Whether you use a paper time chart or a digital time chart is up to you, and the simplest way to capture the difference between the two is that a digital time chart trades tangibility for convenience. Planning out your time for a week on paper, much like carrying around a paper planner, gives you something tangible to carry around, pull out after class, and fill out with pens and pencils. It makes your schedule feel more real, and the process required to upkeep a physical calendar keeps your mind engaged in your schedule. A digital calendar relieves you of the responsibility of filling out the same classes week after week and makes your calendar accessible from anywhere, but it does so at the cost of your physical interaction with your time chart, and this physical interaction is a good way to start forming the habits of mind involved in managing time. Plus it’s a lot harder to doodle in the margins of your Google Calendar!

10.2.6 A Few Final Thoughts

It’s difficult to remember all the classes, office hours, athletic practices, club meetings, and social events of college. Even more difficult is remembering all the assignments, due-dates, and special club events, that go along with those responsibilities, let alone the relative priority that each item has. More than difficult, though, it’s stressful. It detracts from your ability to focus on and enjoy the content of what you’re learning when you have to spend mental energy constantly keeping track of what’s the highest priority task you have to do next. The “weight” that comes from mentally juggling so many different tasks is even worse for projects that are large, important, and ambiguous. When you create a time-chart and schedule time to do a specific task, you’re effectively relieving yourself of one ball that you were juggling by giving the tasks specific time and place on your schedule.

Additional Resources

The strategies for time management we’ve talked about here are a great way to start, but honing a strategy or set of strategies that work well for you is a skill that can take years! If you still have questions after reading this section or would like to discuss a more personalized approach to time management, try scheduling an appointment with a trained Peer Academic Consultant (AC)
10.3 Getting Organized

There is a lot of digital and print material associated with all of the things you’re juggling as a college student. As a student, of course you have lots of papers and books—and their digital equivalents—to keep track of. But you probably also have paper in other areas of your life. As an employee, you likely have tax forms. As a student living away from home or studying abroad, you will likely need to keep track of a passport and other travel-related documents. You probably also have papers associated with clubs and/or off-campus community activities. Keeping all the physical and digital materials in your life organized goes hand in hand with keeping your time organized because having the things you need readily accessible can make the difference between a task taking ten minutes or an hour (or even longer).

10.3.1 Getting Your School Life Organized

1. *Get a planner and use it.* We discuss this strategy above (see Subsection 10.2.5), but it bears repeating!

2. *Determine which resources you need for each class and buy/rent/download them.*

   (a) Even before the semester starts, use the textbook page on the Bookstore website to figure out what you need for the semester. This is something to look into right away, because in many classes you need to be reading from the textbook before each class. In other classes that require you to read a variety of smaller texts, you generally don’t need them all at once. So check your syllabus and prioritize the ones you will be using in the first few weeks of classes, and make a list on your planner for the books you still need to get.

   (b) On the first day of class when you get the syllabus, see if you need any special computer applications for the class and download them early. This way, if you run into problems, you have time to solve the problem or go to Tech Services before any assignments requiring the application are due.

   (c) As soon as you can, print and/or download readings that are posted online so that you can store them in a binder and/or digital folder. That way, you can access them without WiFi and don’t have to worry about a long line at the printer when you want to grab a reading in a hurry.

3. *Designate a place to keep track of materials for each class.*

   The system that works best for you will depend somewhat on your classes and your personal preferences, but the basic idea is that you will be working with a lot of paper and digital resources for all of your classes. It’s helpful if you use the same basic organizational structure for your digital documents as for your paper documents. A computer is required.
for lots of assignments in college, and pretty soon documents and readings will start piling in distant folders. Soon, you may find that you can also access some documents after typing approximately twenty different search words in the “search my computer” bar, until they pop up in a Documents folder within a Documents folder within a Miscellaneous folder. Don’t let this happen! Instead, make folders with the name of each class on your personal computer desktop, Google Docs, or your school desktop. This is where the materials for each class will live. Here are some specifics on different kinds of materials you’ll have:

(a) Notes. For nearly all classes, you’ll be keeping notes on paper. If your classes require a lot of lecture notes, a notebook for each class works well. If you have classes that are always on the same day, it can be a good option to have a two- or three-subject notebook for those classes.

(b) Readings. If your class uses a collection of various readings, that can lead to a lot of papers floating around! Unless lifting a giant backpack is part of your weight-training plan, you will probably not want to bring everything from the whole semester to class every day and you will likely want to have a folder for the week’s printed paper readings and a binder in your room where you store readings from earlier and later weeks in the semester.

i. If your readings are printed out, you will probably find it easiest to organize your stored readings chronologically by week (so, the readings progress from the beginning to the end of the semester, right there in your binder).

ii. If your readings are electronic, you may want to rename the files so that they’re easy for you to find—you might want to name them by the author’s last name, or you may want to name them by the date on which you’re reading them—or by both the author name and the date.

(c) Assignments. You may receive a paper copy of assignments in class, but it’s helpful also to download each assignment from Moodle/Canvas and add it to the digital folder corresponding to that class.

4. Collect contact information from at least one person in each class. Everyone ends up suffering from the Puget Plague at one point or another, but it doesn’t have to make you fall behind in classes. Your week will be a lot easier if you can get the notes and new assignments from a classmate the day of, rather than having to wait until you’re recovered to set up a time to meet with your professor. This also gives you a go-to person to study with when exams and papers start coming up.

5. Designate a study space that you will always have available. This may take a week or two to figure out, but it is really helpful to have at least one place that is accessible and where you can always work, free of clutter. This could be your desk in your room, but that desk always has to have space to work. So if you don’t think you can maintain that or if you keep a lot on your desk, maybe it’s the library or your resource room in Thompson. Just find a place that you can always (or almost always) access, where you are able to get into a productive study “zone.”
10.3.2 Staying Organized

1. **Update your planner, every day.**
   
   (a) As the semester goes on, keep updating your planner in the daily section when assignments come up
   
   (b) Also add non-academic things to your planner that you need to be sure not to forget. Think doctor appointments, work meetings, and club meetings.

2. **Secure all the resources you need for each week.**
   
   (a) This will apply most to classes involving a variety of materials, rather than one main textbook. If your class has frequent readings, download all the readings you will need for that week. Put them in your desktop folder for that class.
   
   (b) If you’ll be reading a new book next week, make sure you have it and switch out your materials.
(c) Friday is probably the best day to get everything together quickly for the next week. If you’re planning to check out for part of the weekend, once you are back in school mode, your assignments will be ready for you to tackle.

3. Bring the right materials to each class by planning the day before. Each night, make sure you have the folder and the notebook/binder for each class the next day.

4. Keep your technology updated. Back up your files. This is a very important step that gets easily overlooked or put off, but it’s easy to do and helps avoid a student’s worst nightmare: computer crashes right before a major paper is due, when you lose the file and have to beg your professor for an extension and wallow as you contemplate whether technology is destroying society. This means a lot of stress for you, and your professor is likely to see this kind of predicament as a poor planning problem rather than a technology problem. So, with better planning, you can avoid this!

   (a) There are lots of cloud-based options for storage (iCloud, GoogleDrive, Dropbox, OneDrive— as well as your own personal Puget Sound account at vDesk. Even if your computer crashes or gets stolen, you can still access your documents in the cloud.

   (b) You could also back up to an external hard drive.

   (c) If these things are still confusing, just go to Tech Services and ask for help! They will be happy to restore you with a sense of academic calm.

5. Put your semester into deep storage. At the end of each semester, make a new folder and place all the classes from the past semester there, so you can access them again if you need to but so that they don’t clutter up your day-to-day life. Label this folder something obvious, like Spring 2018 Courses, or UPS Semester 1. Here’s an example

![Figure 10.3.1](image-url)
10.3.3 School Meets Life

A lot of what you’ll be doing in college revolves around school, but there are lots of other parts of your life where keeping organized will make everything more relaxed and productive. Here are a few tips.

**Email.** Once you start college, you’ll likely have at least two email addresses: your personal one and your Puget Sound account, and having multiple accounts means that it’s helpful to have a plan for keeping on top of those new demands.

- Decide how you want to use your different accounts—there are different approaches. Some people prefer to keep things strictly school vs. personal, and that makes it easier when you graduate and don’t use your Puget Sound account any more. Some people like everything being mixed together, because that makes it easier to just check one account. Regardless of your strategy, you’ll need to check your Puget Sound email, since you’ll get emails from professors and from the school there.

- Don’t keep thousands of unread messages in your inbox. If this is already the state of your email, clear/mark as read your unread messages. Before you do this, make sure there are no important unread messages, because it’s easy to forget about them once they’re marked “read.” It’s different for each type of email, but a quick online search will get you step-by-step instructions.

- Check your email at least once a day while you’re enrolled in classes and at least every few days during other times if you’re expecting contact from anyone. During the school week, it’s helpful to check at least once in the morning and once in the evening, as professors will generally inform you about assignments or changes to the syllabus via email. If your morning class is cancelled, you don’t want to miss the chance to sleep in because you didn’t check your email!

**File organization.** Part of being an adult is learning how to deal with all of the important papers that will come your way—and all the important papers you’ll need to hang on to for when you want to get a job after graduation. Think about what documents are in your life and divide them into categories, so you can always access something if you need it. It really depends on what your life looks like, but some examples that could be helpful are

- The professor’s (or department’s) policy on extensions and late work

- Career information: a running list of the places you’ve worked, the dates you worked there, and your supervisors’ names and contact info—along with the more polished versions of this information (resumes, cover letters for past applications, personal statements). This folder is likely to expand and may need to have more sections within it.

- Financial stuff: forms you need for taxes, scholarship information, really anything having to do with money.

- Miscellaneous activities: Being in clubs and sports and music and plays and organizations in college is fun, but it also helps you develop skills that are helpful later on. Toss programs and other evidence from things you’ve done in college into a folder so that you can reference them later on. Who knows? Maybe it’ll be useful to say in a job application that
you have rehearsed and performed in 43 orchestral pieces or that you managed $3700 in ASUPS club funds. You never know what you might want to use as evidence later on in a job application, but you definitely can’t reference something you can’t remember!

Then, do the same with your physical documents. If you don’t want to hang on to the paper copy, you can scan things for free at Collins Library’s scanners. Your filing system doesn’t have to be anything overly complicated. Label the files with the same names as on your computer and add any additional categories you need.
Chapter 11

Different Genres of Writing

Although much of what you write at Puget Sound will be academic, you will have plenty of opportunities to write in other styles and for other purposes.

11.1 Email Etiquette

Emailing faculty, staff, and off-campus professionals can be daunting because it is unfamiliar. What kind of language is appropriate? What should I call them? How do I write formally without sounding weird? Although an email to a professor doesn’t require the same level of formality that a letter to the Queen of England does, using formal conventions and style is a valuable way to show respect for your professors and communicate your own maturity. But formality becomes especially tricky because different professors often have different preferences about the type of language they use and expect to receive. As a general guideline, it is better to err on the side of formality than to risk coming across as disrespectful. With this in mind, it’s a good idea to be relatively formal in your first email to a professor and then alter or not alter your style depending on the professor’s level of formality in their reply. Much like an academic essay, formal emails contain an introduction (or a greeting), a body, and a conclusion (or a closing). Below are some tips to keep in mind when sending and receiving emails.
Greetings. (from most formal to least)

- Dear Professor ________,
- Dear Professor,
- Professor ________,
- Hello, Professor ________.
- Hi, Professor ________.
- Hi Professor ________.

The Body. The body of your email, like the body of a paper, contains the information you want to convey to your audience (i.e., the email recipient(s)). Since people usually receive a lot of emails throughout the day, it’s best to keep your emails short and to the point.

Of course, being brief doesn’t mean that you have to be curt or abrasive; professors, staff members, and other professionals are people, too! If you feel so inclined, you might begin the body of your email with something like “I hope your week is off to a good start,” or “I hope you have been having a good summer.” In general, the key is to be polite but not too personal.

Next, you want to write everything you need to say clearly and concisely. It’s helpful to break up your text into paragraphs that are shorter than paragraphs you’d typically write in an essay. You can also put an extra space in between paragraphs to make them easier to read quickly.

Finally, because writing to faculty and staff members is a professional activity, you will often be expected to write using Standard American English (SAE) conventions, including punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and word choice.

Closings. Even if you have an automatic signature set up, it’s best to precede your name with a nice closing remark.

(From most formal to least)

- Sincerely,
- Regards,
- Best regards,
- Onward,
- Warmly,
- Thank you,
- Many thanks,
- Best, [the easiest and probably most common]
- All the best,
- Best wishes,
- Cheers,
Tips on Responses.

- If it’s not the weekend, a holiday, or a vacation, and if your professor is not out of town, on leave, or at a conference, you should be able to expect a reply within 24 hours. If you haven’t received an email back after 24 hours except on the weekend, when many faculty members don’t check email, it is usually okay to send another email. When writing your second email, continue being polite and don’t be hurt, offended, or frustrated that you didn’t get a reply. Remember, professors are people, too, with lots to juggle, including email responses.

- On a similar note, if a professor uses their first name in their closing, then it is likely that the professor is okay with you calling them by their first name. However, if you’re in doubt, then you should definitely ask the professor’s preference.

  Sidenote. It’s much easier to ask at the beginning of the semester how a professor prefers to be addressed rather than at the middle or end of the semester, when it is more awkward.

- Just as you expect quick responses from the people you email, so too should you be conscious of the time you take to reply to emails.

- Take a moment to write back to acknowledge or thank the professor for their response, especially if it was an especially long or thoughtful response.
11.2 Personal Statements

**What is a personal statement?** A personal statement is just that—a statement about you! While that sounds simple, writing about yourself in a succinct, honest, humble, and articulate way can actually be some of the most difficult writing you will do. Personal statements are generally written for graduate or professional school applications and include a narrative-style account of your professional interests, intellectual strengths, and any other background information that highlights your ambitions and qualifications for that program. Personal statements will likely be read quickly by admissions committee members who are also reading a slew of other applications, so consider the statement as a personal story that highlights a few important and (ideally) distinctive aspects about yourself rather than a mere list of your academic merits and accomplishments. Nonetheless, remember that because your personal statement will likely respond to a question specific to that application, it’s important to organize and articulate your statement accordingly.

**Questions to Think About Before Writing.**

- When do you feel the most fulfilled/at your happiest?
- Why do you feel fulfilled by that area of your life?
- Why are you interested in or passionate about it?
- Where do these interests originate in your life history? What has influenced you to pursue these interests?
- How do your current activities/commitments reflect these interests, values, and beliefs?
- How have these activities and your particular experiences prepared you for a career in your chosen field? In what way did they change your perspective or approach to a certain problem?
- How will these values and interests allow you to contribute to your chosen field of study? What contributions do you plan on making?
Tips for Writing.

Use your personal statement to complement your application
You’re likely writing this statement alongside a number of other application materials (resume, CV, essay responses, etc.), so make sure you don’t just repeat what you included in these other documents. Think of your personal statement as an opportunity to showcase the qualities and interests that you don’t have room to display in your other materials.

Be as clear and succinct as possible  Most personal statements are fairly short (two to three pages) and are read quickly, so it’s important to get your main points across clearly and quickly—don’t make your reader have to search for your qualities amidst complicated prose. However, personal statements should ensnare the reader’s attention, so use language that is not overly formal and businesslike.

Tell a story  While it’s easy to just list your characteristics and experiences, conveying them with a story is a much more powerful way to showcase your writing as well as convey who you are as a person. Towards this end, try to consider the personal statement as a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. Maybe describe a few critical experiences that have influenced your outlook on a certain issue, or include a couple anecdotes that display how you responded to a certain challenge. Most importantly, your statement should, like a story, reflect an evolution of yourself in relation to the specific experience/program to which you’re applying: How have these experiences changed your perspective about X over time? How are you different in relation to X than you were in the “beginning”? How do you plan on using this accumulated knowledge to contribute to the program/experience/field to which you’re applying?

Be humble and honest  Developing an appropriate stance is hard. How are you supposed to showcase your qualities without being self-congratulatory or pandering? This difficulty is one of the reasons using narrative instead of just listing adjectives is so important: with a narrative you can avoid bragging and instead, paint an honest and human picture of yourself by describing a regret you’ve had, a challenge you’ve encountered, or a situation in which you didn’t respond as you now would. It’s all right (even great) to talk about failure and frustration, just as long as you describe how you overcame or learned from it.

For more tips and tricks on how to write a personal statement, see the “Hints for a Successful Essay” page on the Puget Sound website. Remember that you can bring in your personal statement drafts to the Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Fellowships (Howarth 114) and the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching.
11.3 Cover Letters

**What is a cover letter?** Chances are, if you are applying for a job or internship, you will be required to write a cover letter. Cover letters are short, one-page letters in which you introduce yourself, identify which position you are applying for, and explain why you are interested in and qualified for that position. Cover letters can be a crucial part of an application because in many cases it is the one place where you will be able to present yourself as a person rather than just a list of past experiences and jobs (as is the case with your resume). A cover letter will be among the first things a potential employer will read, so it’s important to put some time and effort into the crafting of your cover letter.

**Address.** A cover letter is a version of a business letter. Include your name, your address, the date you are applying, the hiring manager’s name and title (if you have it), the company/agency name, and the company/agency address.

**Greetings.** Cover letters are generally addressed to the individual who will be doing the hiring. If you know their name, feel free to address them formally with their appropriate title, even if you know them well (e.g., Ms., Mr. Dr., etc.). If you do not know the name of the person who is hiring, you can address the letter to the appropriate role: hiring manager, program director, company recruiter, or internship coordinator. Again, it’s important to address all roles formally.

- Dear Ms. Smith:
- Dear Mr. Smith:
- Dear Dr. Smith:
- Dear Hiring Manager:
- Dear Program Director:
Dear Recruiter:

Dear Internship Coordinator:

Here’s an example of how all of the above fits together:

Abigail Apple
1111 Orchard Lane
Tacoma, WA 98416

April 11, 2016

Olivia Orange, Human Resources Director
Fruitful Thinking Health Foods
1234 Cherry Blossom Ave.
Tacoma, WA 98416

Dear Ms. Orange:

**Body.** When writing the body of your cover letter, don’t beat around the bush. Be clear, concise, and straightforward about why you’re writing and how you meet their qualifications. The body of your cover letter should generally be about three to four (short) paragraphs long, so you don’t have time to be flowery.

**First Paragraph.** Your first paragraph should introduce yourself, specify which job you are applying for and why you are interested, and provide a brief summation of your qualifications. For instance, you might begin with something as straightforward as “I am writing to apply for the position of .” You may also mention where you found out about the position (on the agency’s website, through a professional connection, etc.). You might then mention a little bit about yourself and your experience (“As a graduate in neuroscience at the University of Puget Sound ...,” “As a raft river guide in Alaska last summer ...”). You can finish the paragraph with a brief list of the qualifications you feel are pertinent to the available position (“I believe my__, , and _____ have prepared me particularly well for the position of ____.”)

Remember that it’s also important to show interest in the position: Why are you applying? Why are you excited for this opportunity? What contributions can you bring to the position? What will you get out of it (though, keep in mind that the employer is probably not as interested in what you will gain from the position as what you will bring to it)?

**Second–Third Paragraphs.** Your next couple of paragraphs should build on the ideas you introduced in your first paragraph by demonstrating in more detail why you are qualified for the position. In these paragraphs you can use more qualitative statements and specific details to emphasize those skills that best demonstrate your competency. The job application will likely include a list of the qualifications and duties of potential candidates, so try to choose experiences that exhibit those skills and competencies. Select a couple of these experiences to elaborate, making sure to include your responsibilities in those roles, the duties you performed, and what you learned from them that would be valuable for you in this position. If you don’t have experience doing this
job in particular, try to emphasize those parts of your past jobs that do fulfill qualifications specific to the job and your willingness to learn new skills. However, it’s important to be honest when writing your cover letter; eventually your true qualifications will become clear, so don’t exaggerate or misrepresent yourself.

Fourth Paragraph. In your final paragraph, it’s important to remind the reader of your interest in the position and what you think you can contribute to the agency/company. To do this you can reiterate those specific skills and competencies that make you especially qualified for the position. Finally, provide your phone and email contact information so they may get in touch with you and let them know you are excited to meet with them in person. Thank them for their time and the opportunity to apply for/consideration for the position.

Closing. Closings for cover letters should be formal. “Sincerely” and “Thank you” are good go-to closings. Below this, sign your full name in ink (if you can), with your name typed below the signature.

Sincerely,

Abigail Apple

Abigail Apple

Tips for Writing.

Be specific When writing your cover letter, be specific about the skills and competencies you bring to the position.

Demonstrate your knowledge of the position and/or company It’s important to write a separate cover letter for every job to which you are applying. Even if you apply for a million jobs, you should make sure each and every cover letter is tailored to each position.

Avoid overused character traits While it may be tempting to use phrases that highlight positive qualities about your work ethic (passionate, determined, hard worker, self-starter, fast learner), these characteristics are often perceived as overused and lazy attempts to market yourself. Instead, try to demonstrate these qualities through your specific experiences.

Don’t just rewrite your resume Don’t do it. Your cover letter should emphasize two to three experiences that demon-
strate your specific qualifications for that position.

**Use clear and simple prose** Cover letters should be no more than one page, so you’ll have to be selective with the language you use.

**Keep it formal but conversational** Even though you should be formal while addressing your prospective employer, you don’t need to be overly formal—try to keep it conversational.

For more tips and tricks on how to write a great cover letter and resume, see the “CES Cover Letter and Thank You Note Guide” from the Career and Employment Services webpage. When in doubt, visit Career and Employment Services!

### 11.4 Resume

**Resume.** A resume is a list of your education history, past employment, professional skills/knowledge, and any other qualifications that are relevant to the job to which you are applying. Even if you are applying for many jobs within a similar field, you will likely need to revise your resume for every job application you submit (for instance, if you are applying for a computer tech position, you probably wouldn’t include your cat-sitting experience). However, there are some basic things you need to include in every resume to make it as strong as possible.

**Contact.** The contact serves as both the heading of your resume and offers the various ways your prospective employer can contact you. A contact can be personalized based on how you would best like to present yourself, but it generally includes your:

- Full name, large and centered
- Permanent mailing address
- Email address
- Cell phone number
ABIGAIL APPLE
1111 Orchard Lane, Tacoma, WA 98416
Email: aapple@pugetsound.edu
Cell: (253) 555-5555
LinkedIn profile: www.linkedin.com/in/aapple

Education. In the education section, include your degree, graduation month and year, where you went to college/university, your GPA, awards won (month and year), and relevant cocurricular activities (include date range, or month and year). Remember to list only those awards and activities that may be relevant to the job application.

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Science (B.S.)—Horticulture May 2016
University of Puget Sound (Tacoma, WA)
Magna Cum Laude, GPA: 3.90
Awards Won: Dean’s List (Fall 2013–Spring 2016); Outstanding Senior in Horticultural and Earth Sciences (Spring 2016); Summer Science Scholar (Summer 2015)

Past Relevant Experience. In the past experience section, try to select a few relevant experiences or positions in reverse chronological order (most recent at top) that lend themselves particularly well to the job to which you are applying. For each experience, include:

• the position or role you held (bolded)
• the institution or agency at which you held it (italicized)
• the city, state in which the institution/agency is located (italicized)
• the date range for which you held it (right-aligned)

• a brief, past-tense summation of your specific responsibilities and duties you had in that role (in fragment sentences, bulleted)

Keep in mind that these experiences do not necessarily need be paid employment, but should rather reflect your qualifications and accomplishments working in a relevant or related field. Use fragment bullet points to list the duties you performed in each position and try to be as specific as possible when describing these duties, limiting yourself to two to four bullet points per position. For instance, rather than “honored social skills” as a campus visit host, you could describe how you “greeted, engaged with, and answered questions for prospective students and their families during one-hour informational tours.” Try to highlight only the most important duties of a particular position and to avoid repeating similar tasks and skills; for instance, if you “conducted scheduling and administrative and office support” for multiple positions, you may want to include this only for the positions in which this was a critical part of the job. Remember that your resume should have an overarching focus but that different positions may emphasize different aspects of your qualifications.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
President, Environmental Campus Outreach Aug. 2015–May 2016
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA
• Scheduled weekly club meetings to facilitate discussions about environmental activism and student-led outreach campaigns on campus
• Coordinated and hosted several sustainable-focussed events for University students by communicating with on-campus departments and Tacoma entrepreneurs, including a Fall Harvest Festival where local farmers showcased their products to the campus community to spread awareness of Farm-to-Table days
• Facilitated relationship between University students and Swan Creek Park Food Forest workers, establishing a durable volunteering opportunity for current and future classes

Food Caretaker and Salesperson June 2014–Aug. 2015
Tacoma Boys Food Co-op, Tacoma, WA
• Watered, handled, and packaged organic food products for consumer use, enhancing knowledge of proper food-care and locally-sourced food products
• Provided customer service to consumers by answering questions about food sourcing and conducting monetary transactions

If you have independent research that you would like to showcase, for each research project, include the:
• name of your project (bolded and in quotes)

• date range you conducted said research (right-aligned)

• venue (conference, symposium, etc.) at which it was presented (italicized)

• city and state in which it was conducted/presented (italicized)

• brief synopsis of your research, final format of research (poster, paper, thesis, publication), and any awards conferred upon
Remember to include only research that appropriately showcases your qualifications for the job to which you are applying. Like your past experiences section, keep the bullet-point descriptions of your research simple and to a minimum.

**List 11.4.1: Relevant Research**

**Independent Research**
- Influence of invasive Rubus armeniacus (Himalayan blackberry) on growth capacity and abundance of native species in a managed forest system in Tacoma, WA.
  Science Summer Research Symposium—University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA.
- Awarded competitive $3500 grant to conduct ecological research on the inhibitive effects of blackberry bush presence on native target species' growth capacity, utilizing foliage growth measurements and classification techniques.
- Presented findings in poster format at Hameed Hall (University of Puget Sound) in Fall 2014.
- Published final paper on "Forest Ideas" online database for student research.

**Relevant Skills.** Many resumes have a relevant skills section that allows potential employers (or a computerized application tracking system) to easily scan your abilities and qualifications. It offers a list of terms for skills that you have accumulated and gained proficiency in during your work/research experiences and that you will likely utilize in the position to which you are applying. It can include more umbrella terms like "public speaking" or "presentation experience" as well as more specific names for particular programs or techniques, such as “R- statistical programs” or “Microsoft Excel.” You can include as many skills as you like, but limit yourself to only those skills that are relevant to the specific job. Bold those skills that are more pertinent than others, and use two-column formatting to save space.

**Relevant Skills**
- Horticultural research
- Field data collection
- Plant classification
- Plant care-taking
- R- statistical program
- Public speaking
- Scientific writing
- Microsoft Office
- Group management
Tips for Writing.

**Tailor your resume to the job** Just as you did while writing your cover letter, you will want to tailor your resume to the job to which you are applying. However, unlike your cover letter, you should not explicitly mention the job to which you are applying or how these experiences have prepared you for that specific position (that’s what the cover letter is for).

**Use simple prose** Your resume is not the place to show off your writing abilities to your potential employer—save that for the cover letter. Rather, resumes should use clear and concise prose (often bulleted fragments) to showcase 1) what you’ve done and 2) how it contributed to your overall preparedness.

**Avoid using vague or overused phrases** Try to be as specific as possible when describing your past work experience and skills. If you are adept at using a particular software program, technical skill, research method, lab procedure, writing type, or other form of specialized knowledge, name it explicitly.

**Format your resume cleanly and with selective emphasis** While bold and italics can in some instances highlight those skills you most want to showcase, be selective with the emphases you use. Typically, it is best to place emphasis on (in whichever way, based on your preferences): your name, your degree, school, and GPA (if applicable), titles of positions held, titles of specific research projects, and any specific skills you want to draw attention to in the “Skills” section. Dates of work experiences can also be right-aligned to preserve a sense of aesthetic balance to your resume. Above all, try to figure out a professional-looking format that works best for you and your experiences and keep it consistent throughout.

For more tips and tricks on how to write a great cover letter, see this “Resume Packet” from the Career and Employment Services webpage. Remember that you can always bring in your resume drafts to the Career and Employment Services office (Howarth 101) and the CWLT (Howarth 109) for editing and revising ideas!

### 11.5 Thank-You Notes

**Why to Write a Thank-You Note.** After you’ve sent in your cover letter and resume (and any other application materials required), all that’s left to do is wait to hear from your potential employer. Chances are, if you spent time crafting a strong cover letter and resume, you’ll be approved for an interview! We won’t go into the process of helping you prepare for an interview here (for that, you can make an appointment at Career and Employment Services by visiting the CES office in Howarth 101, calling 253.879.3161, emailing ces@pugetsound.edu, or visiting the CES website). However, there are some
things you can do immediately after an interview to increase your likelihood of moving on in the hiring process. One of these things is writing a thank-you note to each of your interviewers thanking them for their time and consideration of your application and reiterating your interest in the position.

What to Include. Your thank-you note should be simple and concise, demonstrate your enthusiasm for the organization, and express your excitement at the potential opportunity of working with them. To this end, a strong thank-you note should include:

- a statement of appreciation to your interviewers for meeting with you
- a reference to a specific topic of conversation that arose during the interview
- an acknowledgement of how the interview improved your understanding of the position/organization
- a reminder of any specific skills you could contribute to the organization
- a final thank you to the interviewers for their time and consideration

Timing and Medium. Hopefully, you will have obtained a business card or email addresses from your interviewer(s) during the interview. If you haven’t, try to find their contact information on the company’s website or directory. Try to get your thank-you note to your interviewers as quickly as possible (within 24 hours) after your interview. This way, they will likely still remember you and you can refresh yourself in their memory by referring back to the interview. Writing a thank-you note shortly after your interview will also allow you to recall specific details about the experience that you wouldn’t be able to remember weeks or even a few days afterwards.

You have a few different formatting options when it comes to writing your thank-you note. You can 1) handwritten it, 2) type it up and print it out, or 3) email it to your interviewers. There are benefits and drawbacks to each format, and you should choose the one that makes the most sense given convenience and the type of company to which you are applying. For instance, handwritten
notes are more personalized and can demonstrate your passion for the position. However, for a very time-sensitive situation, an immediate and polite email might be most appropriate (for more on email etiquette, see Email Etiquette). For more on the benefits and limitations of each format, see CES’s handy “Cover Letters and Thank-you Notes” guide on the Job Search Resources page.
Chapter 12

Using Technology

As people with butterfinger typing who (more often than we’d like to admit) accidentally hit the “delete” key after highlighting entire new paragraphs we’ve just written, we’ll be the first to admit it: TECHNOLOGY IS HARD (and thank goodness for “Edit-Undo”). And with our academic and social lives becoming increasingly dependent on a wider variety of technological resources for researching, sharing, and disseminating information, maintaining a basic level of computer literacy is essential for students now more than ever. But whether it’s using Microsoft Word to spell-check your writing or trying to keep track of all your final research paper sources, technology can also be a lifesaver. Here we’ve compiled a list of tips and tricks to help you use the software programs available to you as efficiently (and with as little hair tearing out) as possible.

12.1 Microsoft Word

At this point in your academic career, you are likely acquainted with at least one word processor. Many computers come with a license for Microsoft Word and those that do not may use Apple Pages or LibreOffice Writer (both of which are free), among others. Also, there are freeware options available online for your word processing needs (e.g., Microsoft Office Online, iCloud Pages, and Google Docs). If you are looking for a word processor, it’s best to try out different ones and use the one that works best for you. As Microsoft Office is available to all Puget Sound students on the university’s virtual desktop (vDesk), it is the word processor we will be exploring here. The exact tips and tricks presented here may not translate across applications, but most word processors will have similar functions.
12.1.1 Spell-Check Errors

Computer technologies have undeniably improved the speed and accuracy of our writing abilities, particularly through the use of automatic spelling and grammar checkers in many word processors. While these checkers can be useful, it is easy to become over-reliant on these technologies as a replacement of individual proofreading. We often forget that computers can’t read our minds. In fact, many simple spelling and grammar errors actually can be caused by an over-dependence on auto-checkers, with word processors replacing your misspelled words with incorrect suggestions based on common Web word-distortions. For instance, a sentence stating, “I definantly saw something fishy going on” would be auto-corrected to “I defiantly saw something fishy going on,” which has a meaning different than what the writer originally intended (“definitely”). If you use spell-check or grammar-check, look individually at the suggestions your word processor makes, rather than accepting all the corrections at once. It’s also important to remember that computer auto-checkers, while useful, should not be used as a replacement for manual proofreading. Carefully read through your document, give it to a friend, and/or take it to the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching (CWLT) for some help with proofreading strategies (though don’t expect the CWLT to actually do all the proofreading for you). Below is a list of commonly misspelled words that often are auto-corrected to very different words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Word</th>
<th>Common Misspelling</th>
<th>Auto-Corrected Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitely</td>
<td>definantly</td>
<td>defiantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>alot</td>
<td>allot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infinitely</td>
<td>infinitely</td>
<td>infinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>espresso</td>
<td>expresso</td>
<td>express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reinsurance</td>
<td>reinsance</td>
<td>renaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surprised</td>
<td>surpised</td>
<td>surpassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insolent</td>
<td>insulent</td>
<td>insulant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoard</td>
<td>hord</td>
<td>horde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>load</td>
<td>lod</td>
<td>lode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desperate</td>
<td>disperate</td>
<td>disparate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aesthetic</td>
<td>astetic</td>
<td>ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perpetuate</td>
<td>perpetate</td>
<td>perpetrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12.1.2 Inserting Footnotes

Let’s face it: footnotes can be a pain. Luckily, your word processor has some handy tricks for making adding footnotes relatively pain free!

Let’s say you have a couple paragraphs with some source evidence you’d like to cite using footnotes.

To add a footnote, simply place your cursor at the end of the sentence containing that piece of evidence (AFTER THE PERIOD), open the “References” tab, and select “Insert Footnote.”

A small superscript number will appear after the period corresponding with the footnote sequence. At the same time, a line will appear at the bottom of the page with a small number beneath it corresponding to that footnote. You can then write the footnote citation according to the appearance order of the citation (for more on how to write footnotes, see Chapter 8).
Every time you add a new piece of evidence, you can add subsequent footnotes by using the "Insert Footnote" function and the citations will stack sequentially at the footer of the page. However, keep in mind that if you delete the superscript number in the text, you will also delete its corresponding footnote and change the numbering sequence of subsequent footnotes (but this is also nice because it keeps track of the order for you).
12.1.3 Formatting Reference Lists, Bibliographies, and Works Cited

Whether you are writing using APA, Chicago, or MLA citation style, you will most likely be required to include a reference list, bibliography, or works cited (respectively) at the end of your paper. While keeping track of your sources and writing up references can be a daunting task (see Chapter 8 and Section 12.2 for some very helpful tricks), formatting them using a word processor is actually less painful than it might seem. We won’t go into the specific details of each citation style (again, see Chapter 8 for this), but we will talk about how to create hanging indents and how to format each source list using Word.

I used to have to tab over a million times to try to create hanging indents in my works cited—until I learned this method, and my life literally changed. To create a reference list, bibliography, or works cited page using hanging indents, begin with centering a References (or Bibliography or Works Cited, depending on what citation style you’re using) title at the top of your page and entering your first citation beneath it (remember to keep everything double-spaced in APA and MLA and single-spaced with a blank line after each entry in Chicago).

Next, place your cursor at the very beginning of the second line of your
citation, right-click, and select the “Paragraph” option.

In the “Indentations” category, change the “Special:” option to “Hanging.” When you do this, the “By:” should automatically change to 0.5” (and if it doesn’t, increase it to 0.5”). Click “OK” ...

... and your source magically scoots over half an inch, creating a hanging indent!!
But what’s really nice about this feature is that you only need to set a hanging indent for the first citation; all subsequent citations will automatically indent over to mirror the hanging indent of Source A.

12.1.4 Peer Editing Tools

One of the cooler features of word processors is that many of them allow you to comment, offer suggestions, and even directly overlay changes onto a document. This can be particularly useful when you are peer reviewing another person’s document, which you will undoubtedly be doing a lot of throughout your college career. Keep in mind that it’s generally more constructive to use the comment function to offer suggestions rather than editing the document directly. That said, tracking changes directly can be useful for smaller errors or editing suggestions. (For more tips on peer review etiquette, see Subsection 4.8.2.)
To comment on a specific part of someone’s writing, open the “Review” tab, highlight the desired phrase, and select “New Comment” in the toolbar.

A red-outlined box will appear to the right with a line indicating the section being discussed by the comment. In this box, you can write friendly suggestions, observations, and questions about the text, which your peer may then reply to or check off as resolved.
You can also edit the other’s person’s writing directly using Track Changes. Open the “Review” tab, select “Track Changes” in the toolbar, and scroll down to select the “Track Changes” option.

When using Track Changes, feel free to edit the document as you would any other (deleting portions, adding new ones, etc.) and all of the changes you make will be in red overlaid on top of the original document. Track Changes is useful because it allows you to work directly with the text while saving the original. However, try to keep the revisions you make using Track Changes to a minimum while reviewing peers’ work; if you change, add, or remove too much from the text, you could inadvertently start to take control of the document, making it less of a mutual collaboration between you and your peer and more of a copyediting session.
If you are being reviewed, you can accept or reject tracked changes by placing your cursor over a particular change and clicking “Accept Change” or “Reject Change,” which will replace the original work with the edit or ignore the change altogether, respectively.
After reviewing your peer’s comments and tracked changes, your sentences
(and those of your peer) will likely be even stronger than before.

12.1.5 Adding a Cover Page

Sometimes your professors will require you to preface your paper with a cover
page. Cover page formats vary by citation style, but typically include the title
of your paper, your name, course number/title, professor name, and assignment
due date. The APA style requires university affiliation, a running header, and
an author note instead of course, professor name, and due date. Remember
that if you have any questions about how to format your cover page, it’s best
to ask your professor for their preferences.

APA. APA-style cover pages require your title, name, university affiliation,
an author note, a page number, and a header that runs along the top of every
page of the document. Generally this running header provides a short synopsis
of the topic of your paper (but does not exactly copy your title).

To begin, place your double-spaced title, name, and university affiliation
about one-third of the way down the page. If an author’s note is required,
place this about two-thirds of the way down (and centered). An author’s
note includes the departmental and institutional information of the student,
any grants or funding associated with the project, and contact information by
which to contact them.

To add the page number and running header, select the “Insert” tab, click
“Page Number,” “Top of Page,” and “Plain Number 3.”

Next, you can add your running header in front of the page number by
writing “Running head: TITLE.” To right-justify your running header, hit the
“tab” key once. Keep in mind that your running header should not be more
than 50 characters long.
Next, keeping your cursor on the header you just created, uncheck the “Different First Page” box in the “Design” tab. This will allow you to delete the term “Running head:” on subsequent pages.

When you have written subsequent pages, the running header will automatically be added to the top of each page. However, you no longer want the term “Running head:” to preface each subsequent header. To delete this from the following pages, place your cursor on the page 2 header, re-check the “Different First Page” box in the “Design” tab, and delete the “Running head:” from the header on page 2.
This will allow you to keep the “Running head:” title on the cover page, but will delete it from subsequent pages.

Chicago. For a Chicago-style cover page, your title, name, course name and number, and assignment due date are single-spaced. You do not need to add your professor’s name (although doing so likely would not hurt). Your title is centered one-third of the way down the page; if it has a subtitle, separate it with a colon and place the subtitle on the next line. Your name, course name/number, and due date should all go about two-thirds of the way down and should be single-spaced.
MLA. To add an MLA-style cover page, simply shift down until your paper begins on the second page of the document (if you click “Different First Page” using the guidelines above for the APA cover page, a page number will not appear on this first page). Include your double-spaced title about one-third of the way down the page, followed by your name, course name and number, professor name, and due date about two-thirds of the way down (all double-spaced).

12.1.6 Finding and Replacing

This is an essential tool to know how to use when you are writing, editing, and revising drafts. For instance, you might use the term “third world” repeatedly throughout your essay but then realize that “Global South” is a more appropriate option. Finding and replacing makes it easy for you to search for all instances of “third world” and replace them with “Global South.”

Finding. Say you would like to find all instances in your paper where you use a certain word or phrase.
Simply highlight the word or phrase you want to find, open the “Home” tab, select the “Find” option on the far right of the toolbar (it is often accompanied by a magnifying glass), and select “Find” on the scroll-down menu.

When you do this, all of the instances of the word or phrase are highlighted in the text and a navigation dialogue box will appear on the left-hand side of
the screen displaying all instances of use. You can go to a certain instance by clicking on the text boxes under the “Results” column.

Replacing. If you’d like to replace a word or phrase with another word or phrase, highlight the desired text you’d like to change, open the “Home” tab, and find the “Replace” option to the far left beneath “Find.”

When you select “Replace,” a dialogue box will appear with the original text and give you the option to write in what you would like to replace it with. You may then hit “Replace” if you’d like to replace that one instance, “Replace All” if you’d like to replace all instances in your document, or “Find Next” to go through all instances until you find the one you want to replace.
Here we replaced all “IMPORTANT WORD”s with “CRITICAL WORD”s, but keep in mind that it’s often better to use a mix of important AND critical words to enhance your vocab diversity. If you use the same important word in every single sentence, your paper will get really repetitive really quickly.

12.2 Zotero

Now that you know how to make citations, we’re going to let you in on a little secret: There’s a magical program called Zotero that can do most of the citation grunt work for you. To call it magic is not to mislead; Zotero is the Muggle equivalent of the Sorting Hat. It somehow reads the minds of articles, books, and websites and knows which pieces of information go where—it can literally cite all of your sources for you. … Just let that sink in for a minute.

However, since citation generators aren’t (yet) perfect, it’s still important that you understand how different styles format citations for different types of sources. Moreover, creating citations by hand is a rite of passage of sorts—one you need to experience in order to appreciate the magic of Zotero. After weeks, months, or years of spending hours working on perfectly formatting a bibliography, the first time you use Zotero will be an experience like no other. You will exclaim and cry tears of joy as all of your citations instantaneously
appear before you.

In short, you need to do your own citations for awhile so you understand how they work and how to do them, but, once you’re comfortable writing them by hand, you can delegate most of your citation work to a program like Zotero. You just need to be thorough in your quality control: You have to scan through each citation to make sure that Zotero read all of the right information and sorted it correctly.

**Note.** Zotero (and other tools like it) can do many, many things. We’re going to cover some basic capabilities Zotero has, but, to learn more about Zotero or other programs, visit the library’s page, make an appointment with a liaison librarian, or look up some YouTube tutorials.

**Step 1: Download Zotero.** You can download it as an extension on Firefox, or you can download a standalone version. The Firefox extension is nice because it’s easily accessible in your browser, but the standalone version can be used with browsers other than Firefox, such as Chrome and Safari. We’ve also heard that the standalone version is good to have in case your browser crashes. In any case, download Zotero and create a free account. You can find all of the necessary information on the Collins Library website.

**Step 2: Do some research!** For more tips on research, see Chapter 1.

**Step 3: Tell Zotero which sources you want it to save.** This step looks slightly different depending on whether you’re using the Firefox plug-in or the standalone version.

For the Firefox version:

![Image of Zotero interface]  
**Click on the Z to open Zotero**

**Note.** You can also skip this step if you don’t want to open the Zotero plug-in. The program will still save articles with the next two steps, even if you can’t see your library.
If you’re looking at a different kind of source, such as an online book or a newspaper article, the icon will look different but will do the same thing.

For the standalone version:
Download the PDF and ...
Drag the PDF into Zotero
If Zotero can’t find the right information, then you have a couple of options:
We found another version of the article and gave it another shot.
Step 4: Make your bibliography. Once you have all necessary sources saved in Zotero, you can ask it (nicely) to make your bibliography. Get ready to be amazed.

First, open the collection that you want to get sources from. You can highlight the sources you want citations for, or you can choose the whole collection. You can also use the Firefox plug-in or the standalone version. Either way, you’ll follow these steps.
Open a document and paste

Take a moment to be amazed
Zotero isn’t just about citations, either! You can use it as a “knowledge-management tool” to manage all of that knowledge you’re collecting.

12.3 Adobe Acrobat Reader

Step 1: Download Adobe Acrobat Reader. Adobe Reader is the most common free PDF-viewing software used for the reading, searching, printing, and notating of PDF files. Adobe is great because it allows you to easily interact with your sources, offering a variety of annotation capabilities; in this way, it’s also more cost-efficient and environmentally friendly than printing out all 120 pages of that reading assignment because you can highlight and annotate most PDF types (although keep in mind your professor may like you to have a hard copy for class, anyways). To download Adobe Acrobat Reader DC, visit get.adobe.com/reader.

Step 2: Do some research! Put those great research skills to use! (If you need a refresher on how to get started, see Chapter 1.)

Step 3: Download your source. When you find a source you want, download it and save it to your research folder or desktop.
If you have installed Adobe Acrobat Reader, your document should be automatically saved as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file. After it’s saved, you can then open it, and it should open with Adobe Acrobat.

Yay! Now you can begin exploring all of the annotation capabilities Adobe has to offer.

**Step 4: Annotate to your heart’s content.** There are several different ways to annotate a PDF document in Adobe Acrobat. We’ll highlight some of these capabilities below.

**Commenting** You can easily comment on certain parts of the source document by selecting the small speech bubble icon on the right side of the toolbar and clicking on the part you want to comment on. A small window text box will appear wherein you may leave notes/questions to yourself about the text, observations about how to use a certain piece of information, or reminders to do more research elsewhere. You can also engage in a dialogue with yourself (or others if you are collaboratively examining a source) by replying to these comments later on.
Highlighting You can also easily highlight sections of the text using the highlighter function, making it easier for you to go back later and identify significant pieces of information. To do this, click on the highlighter icon on the far right of the toolbar (next to the comment icon) and select the section of the text you’d like to highlight (but try not to over-highlight!). See Section 2.3 for tips on how to annotate effectively.

Note. While this highlighting technique works for most PDF files, some files that have been photocopied don’t have the right line-spacing to accommodate the highlighter function. However, Adobe is smart; in these cases, an option to highlight manually using a box-select tool should be available.

Unlocking More Annotation Tools. To unlock a host of other annotation functions, select the “Tools” tab at the top left of the screen; a screen of icons will appear. Select the “Comment” option at the top left of the screen.
The source document will reappear with a new toolbar below the original. Here you’ll notice the commenting and highlighting icons along with a slew of other editing features.

These features include the following:

**Underlining** To underline a section of text, select the third icon from the left ("T" with a line underneath) and highlight the section of text you want underlined. A green line will appear beneath the section of text.
CHAPTER 12. USING TECHNOLOGY

Strike-Through  If you’d like to strike-through a section of text (particularly useful if you’re editing one of your own pieces or if you want to identify a part of the source document with which you do not agree), select the icon fourth from the left (“T” with a strike-through) and highlight the desired section of text. A red line will strike through this section of text.

Replacing Text  If you’d like to replace text (not so useful for annotating published source documents, but especially useful if you’re editing yours or another’s paper), select the fifth icon from the left (“T” with a strike-through and a speech bubble) and highlight the section of desired text. A blue line will strike through this section of the original text and a window text box will appear allowing you to write the text you want to replace it with.
Inserting Text  If you’d like to insert text (again, more useful for documents you are actively editing than source documents you are annotating), select the sixth icon from the left (“T” with a subscript carrot) and place your cursor in the place in the text where you’d like to insert new text. A small blue box with a carrot will appear in the text, while a window text box will allow you to write the text you’d like to insert.

Adding Text Directly  If you’d like to add text directly onto the document (useful if you want to more easily view your comments), select the seventh icon from the left (plain “T”) and highlight the area you’d like the text to go. Begin writing and your comment will appear directly onto the document.
Adding a Text Box  Another way to add text directly onto a source document is to create a text box. To do this, select the eighth icon from the left (“T” within a box) and create the text box where you want it on the document. A red text box will appear in which you can write your comment.

Drawing Free-form  You can also draw free-form on the document to emphasize certain sections or (if you’re good at drawing using a mouse or touchpad, which I am not) even draw pictures or write comments to annotate the document. To do this, select the ninth icon from the left (pen) and begin to write/draw in red pen anywhere on the document.
(Like I said, I’m not that artistically savvy.)

**Erasing** If you’d like to erase something you’ve drawn, you can also do this by selecting the tenth icon from the left (eraser) and moving it over your drawing to erase it.

**Adding Shapes** If you’re more artistically/visually inclined, you can also add pre-formed shapes to your document to draw emphasis to certain sections or have fun while you annotate. To do this, select the thirteenth icon from the left on the toolbar (cluster of shapes), and use the drop-down menu to select which shape you’d like to draw.
You can also change the color, opacity, and line thickness of your drawing tools by selecting paint bucket and line-thickness icons at the far right of the toolbar.

Go wild! (But not too wild.)

**Keeping Track of Your Comments** Adobe is also really great because it keeps track of each of your comments as you add them and provides a running list of them along the right side of the screen. If you want to jump to a certain comment, simply click on the desired comment in
the list and the document will take you to that comment. You can also arrange these comments by page, author, date, type, checkmark status, and color or filter them by reviewer, type, status, and color.

Changing the Page Viewer There are also useful page-viewing capabilities to the left side of the screen under the “Page Thumbnails,” “Bookmarks,” and “Attachments” icons. “Page Thumbnails” will allow you to see which page of the document you are currently viewing:

Or you can switch to “Bookmarks” to view an outline of the source document and click to go to a certain section:
If there are attachments that were included in the source document, selecting the “Attachments” option will allow you to view them.

**Searching the Document Source** Finally, you can search for key words and phrases in the document by selecting the “Find text” icon (magnifying glass) in the upper left of the original toolbar. A window will appear in which you can type in the word or phrase you’d like to find; selecting “previous” or “next” will bring you to each instance in the document where that term was used.
Appendix A

Glossary of Academic Terms

(Some words you need to know but might have been afraid to ask.)

**Analyze** to break a text into its constituent parts with the intent of interpreting or explaining that text.

**Interpret** to elaborate the meaning or significance of a text, data, or other object of analysis.

**Paraphrase** to rephrase some text with the goal of making it clearer and more concise.

**Prove** to demonstrate the truth of a claim through argument.

**Synthesize** to combine or integrate several things into one coherent whole.

**Thesis** an argument, or the statement of an argument to be followed by substantiation.

**List A.0.1: Words You May See in Writing Assignments**

**Annotated bibliography** a bibliography whose entries are accompanied by a paragraph (or two) summarizing that entry and explaining its relevance to a scholarly project.

**Novel** a book-length work of fiction (not to be confused with a book-length work of nonfiction, which is simply called a book or sometimes a monograph or an edited volume).

**Poem** (in general) a piece of writing formally distinguished by its employment of line breaks and, in some cases, rhythm, rhyme, meter, and stanzas.

**Prose** (in general) a piece of writing formally distinguished by continuous, unbroken lines organized into larger units of text called paragraphs.

269
APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF ACADEMIC TERMS

**Short story** a work of fiction shorter than a novel.

**Subject encyclopedia** an encyclopedia whose entries cohere, often only topically, around a common subject (e.g., *Encyclopedia of Puget Sound*, an encyclopedia on the remediation of the Salish Sea ecosystem).

**Volume** the term given to one book in a work or series composed of multiple books (e.g., Volume 1 of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

**List A.0.2:** Research Terms and Kinds of Sources

**Ethos/Pathos/Logos** terms created by Aristotle to describe different modes of persuasion. These approaches are sometimes combined within a particular piece of rhetoric. Ethos is a rhetorical appeal to the authority of the person or source invoked. It also can mean the dominant spirit of a group or time (kind of like zeitgeist). Pathos is a rhetorical appeal to the audience’s emotions. Logos is a rhetorical appeal to logic, reason, and rigorous argumentation.

**Diction** a writer’s particular choice of words.

**Hyperbole** an exaggeration.

**Irony** the effect produced by the use of any given word, phrase, image, or other medium of communication to signify the opposite of that word, phrase, etc.

**Metaphor** a figure of speech in which one thing is equated with another thing, which it is not (for example, “love is a rose”). “Metaphoric” is often used loosely to describe any kind of figurative language.

**Rhetoric** the style or presentation of writing; how a text says what it says.

**Subjunctive** a grammatical mood indicating a hypothetical situation (what is desired or possible).

**Syntax** the organization and sequencing of words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence.

**List A.0.3:** Rhetorical Terms

---

- **-centrism** a stance that views a certain (centric) position as standard and that views nonconforming positions as unfamiliar and inferior. Eurocentrism, for instance, views the non-European as alien and subordinate to the European and
holds the non-European to the standards of the European. The same definition applies to other “-centrism,” with the appropriate substitutions made. Anthropocentrism replaces European with human; androcentrism replaces European with male; egocentrism replaces European with the self.

**Anachronistic** (of a thing) temporally or historically inconsistent with the period in which it is depicted.

**Analogy** a comparison or similarity between two things.

**Anthropomorphize** to imbue a nonhuman entity with human characteristics.

**Avant-garde** the quality of being experimental.

**Colloquial** (of language) informal, casual, or quotidian.

**Deduction** the act of predicting a particular event based on a pre-established rule about that event.

**Dialectic** a model of development, or a discursive method, predicated on the tension between a first event (thesis) and a second, opposed event (antithesis) and that, sometimes, resolves into a third event (synthesis).

**Induction** the extrapolation of a general rule from repeated particular instances suggesting that rule.

**Empiricism** an epistemological position that states that knowledge derives from sense-experience and that physical experiences actually exist.

**Epistemology** generally, the theory of knowledge; also, the term given to any particular theory of knowledge, such as empiricism.

**Feminism** (broadly defined) the set of all political, social, and ideological movements oriented toward the advancement of women’s rights, especially as they pertain to political, social, cultural, and economic engagement and enfranchisement.

**Heuristic** relating to the process by which a person learns something on their own.

**Motif** a recurring (visual, musical, rhetorical) idea in a work.

**Nomenclature** a set of names in a discipline (or the method used to generate these names).

**Ontology** a subset of philosophical inquiry that investigates the nature of being.

**Paradox** a seeming contradiction between two propositions that may nonetheless be true.

**Premise** a statement that precedes or forms the basis of a consequent statement.
**Stereotype** a reductive concept or idea of a person, group, or thing.

**Tautology** a statement or system that affirms itself, or presupposes the validity of its argument.

**Theme** a subject or topic of central importance to a text.

**Trope** a recurrent theme or image.

**Zeitgeist** the spirit of a given historical period, defined by that period’s prominent ideas and ideologies.

**List A.0.4:** Generally Good Words to Know
Appendix B

Resources

We will be continuing to add resources to supplement the Sound Writing handbook over time, including videos, sample student papers, ideas for writing with awareness, and tips on using Sound Writing in the classroom. Resources are located at http://pugetsound.edu/soundwritingresources.
Colophon

This book was authored and produced with PreTeXt.