# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Writing and Research in the Academic Sphere .......................................................... 1  
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 1  
  Informal, Everyday Research versus Academic Research .................................................... 3  
  Finding a Suitable Topic .......................................................................................................... 6  
  Developing a Research Question .............................................................................................. 7  
  Different Modes of Argument .................................................................................................. 9  
  Citation and Formatting Styles: MLA, APA, and Chicago ..................................................... 11  
  Closing Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 16  
  Essay Templates ...................................................................................................................... 17  

Chapter 2: Research Proposals and Thesis Statements ............................................................. 25  
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 25  
  Search Engines and Databases ............................................................................................... 26  
  Steps for Beginning Your Search .......................................................................................... 32  
  Thinking About Sources ......................................................................................................... 34  
  Moving On: Research Questions and Forming a Working Thesis Statement ....................... 37  
  Creating a Working Thesis ..................................................................................................... 38  
  Putting It All Together: Writing Research Proposals ............................................................ 45  
  Closing Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 50  

Chapter 3: Asking the Right Questions: Academic Honesty, Critical Thinking, Rhetorical Analysis, and Writing Surveys .......................................................... 51  
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 51  
  Plagiarism .............................................................................................................................. 51  
  Critical Thinking ................................................................................................................... 57  
  Rhetorical Analysis ................................................................................................................ 59  
  Writing Surveys and Interviews ............................................................................................ 62  
  Closing Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 65  

Chapter 4: Critical Thinking, Source Evaluations, and Analyzing Academic Writing .......... 67  
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 67  
  Critical Thinking as it Applies to Source Evaluation ............................................................ 68  
  Primary versus Secondary, Popular versus Scholarly ......................................................... 69  
  Factors of Source Evaluation ............................................................................................... 73  
  Beginning your Note-Taking ................................................................................................. 77  
  Active and Analytical Reading ............................................................................................. 79  
  Critical Thinking and Drafting ............................................................................................. 81  
  Closing Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 83  

Chapter 5: Using Materials from Sources .............................................................................. 85  
  Techniques for Including Material from Sources ............................................................... 85  
  Quotation .............................................................................................................................. 88  
  Paraphrase ............................................................................................................................ 91  
  Summary .............................................................................................................................. 94  
  Annotated Bibliographies .................................................................................................... 96  
  Integrating Materials from Sources ..................................................................................... 99  
  Closing Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 104
Chapter 6: Let the Writing Begin ................................................................. 106
  Outlining ........................................................................................................ 106
  Introductions and Body Paragraphs .............................................................. 110
  Structure of the Introduction ...................................................................... 114
  Body Paragraphs .......................................................................................... 115
  Closing Thoughts ......................................................................................... 121

Chapter 7: Drafts, Conclusions, and Abstracts .............................................. 122
  Introduction .................................................................................................. 122
  Drafting ........................................................................................................ 123
  Conclusions ................................................................................................. 124
  Writing your Abstract .................................................................................. 126
  Closing Thoughts ......................................................................................... 128

Chapter 8: It’s Not Over ‘til the Revising, Editing, and Proofreading Are Done .......... 130
  Introduction .................................................................................................. 130
  Revision ........................................................................................................ 130
  Editing .......................................................................................................... 132
  Proofreading ............................................................................................... 133
  Closing Thoughts ......................................................................................... 134
CHAPTER 1: WRITING AND RESEARCH IN THE ACADEMIC SPHERE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to COLL300: Research, Analysis, and Writing! In this course, you will work through the different stages of a research project, from defining an issue and developing a research question to the creation of a two-thousand-word final essay that incorporates critical sources and allows you to add your own voice and argument to an ongoing discussion in your field. As you may have discovered in other classes where research is required (ENGL101 is a good example), this is a process that can be rewarding and even fun, but also has its challenges, to say the least.

Any research we do, whether informally in everyday life or more formally for work or school, involves an attempt to find out what other people are saying or writing about the topic we are looking into. In his book *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, literary scholar Kenneth Burke describes research as participation in an “unending conversation.” He explains that when a new person first comes into the conversation, she cannot jump straight in, but instead needs to listen first and find out what’s going on, just as we must do background research in order to figure out what has been said about a topic we plan to write on. Once she has an idea of what is going on in the conversation, Burke points out that she can begin to participate, responding to others and adding her own ideas, perhaps offering counterarguments to ideas that she believes are incorrect in part or whole (110-111). If we look at the research process in this light, it becomes a bit more clear as to why it is structured the way it is. When you are trying to add in your voice to an ongoing conversation of this kind, knowing what other people have said becomes all the more important; if you
repeat an idea that someone already put forth earlier in the conversation, it could be embarrassing, or even worse, could fatally harm your argument if that idea was discussed and discarded by all participants as incorrect or unworkable.

Thinking about research projects as a conversation can also help us to better understand why it is so important to find reliable sources. In our everyday lives, all sorts of problems can result from believing the claims of unreliable sources. For instance, think of what can happen when you try to research a particular product, like a car. If you only relied on car commercials for information, then you would quickly be confused and would have a very difficult time getting useful information to help you figure out what car best suited your needs. Lost in a sea of ad-speak and talk of luxury features like back-seat DVD players, you might not be able to learn much about the different cars' actual performance on the road. Commercials are probably the epitome of unreliable information in this way; their entire purpose is to sell you something, not to help you learn important facts about how the car will work for you. We can find other examples, however, just by visiting a site like Amazon.com and looking at product reviews there. It quickly becomes clear that while there are some reviews that give good information, other reviews are virtually useless because they are filled with ad-speak, or they seem to be evaluating the product from different standards than you, or perhaps they may even be working from an uninformed viewpoint that makes their opinions factually unsound. This is not the sort of information that you would want to rely on for a major decision in your life, and likewise, unreliable sources are not ones that you would want to rely on when having a serious conversation about an important issue in your academic or professional field.

Finally, one last way in which this metaphor can serve to clarify the expectations of
research projects is in the way that it focuses on your own participation in the discussion of the issue. Imagine that you are engaged in a conversation and another person comes into that conversation, but only adds comments such as, “Yes, that's right!” “Bob said X about that issue,” or “I disagree” without explaining why, or expanding in any way on the topic. Would you find that person's contribution to the discussion to be at all valuable or useful? Probably not, because the person is not actually adding anything of his own. You might even begin to wonder why on earth the person had decided to start talking in the first place, since he did not seem to have anything different to bring to the conversation. This is why it is so important for you to find your own angle on the issue, and your own reasons for contributing. If you can do this, your voice could actually matter within this conversation; it would not just be a reiteration of what others had said, but instead your own reshaping of the information you learned into a contribution of your own.

**Informal, Everyday Research versus Academic Research**

Though research in an academic setting brings on a feeling of dread for some of us, research is not always such a daunting prospect. Even those of us who cringe at the thought of creating a research project for class will find ourselves happily spending hours searching online to learn about a car we think we might want to buy, or stereo system components, or a particular toy for our child. So why is that kind of research so much more fun to do than research for an essay for class?
Table 1.1: Everyday vs. Academic Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Research</th>
<th>Topics and Types of Questions Researched?</th>
<th>Types of Acceptable Sources?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Any; often, however, consumer products, services and service providers, methods for performing particular tasks, etc. Practical information is probably the sort that we use the most.</td>
<td>Open-web sources, product reviews, word-of-mouth: whatever sources you as an individual see as reliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Also wide-ranging, but will usually be somehow limited by the concerns of the field in which you work or study. Theoretical issues are just as likely to be discussed as practical ones.</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed journals preferred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greater ease is probably because it is a topic that you are either very interested in, or one that you are motivated to learn about. The sort of informal research that goes into everyday investigations of this kind is also much easier to do: just throw a search term into Google and you are off! Academic research, on the other hand, tends to be more limited in terms of what topics are appropriate, and actually finding sources is more time-consuming, as you are required to make use of databases to track those sources down, and the search engines used by the databases are more complicated than Google's single box. Fundamentally, however, the issue of motivation remains the same: if you are truly interested in a topic, it is much easier to work on both the research for and the writing of an essay on that topic.

Though it is possible to align the motivations for doing informal research and academic research, the end result is, of course, often different. It is probably safe to say that no one will ever require you to write a two-thousand-word essay discussing the research you
have done on a particular toy kitchen that you have decided to buy for your child as a birthday present. You may, however, write up a brief discussion of that decision into an e-mail to explain to the grandparents which kitchen the child will be receiving and why. In many important structural ways, even these brief communications regarding informal research will have similarities to formal research essays. Each addresses a particular issue or problem that needs to be resolved in some way, and will include some form of a main point or thesis. Each will, however briefly, reference supporting points to explain that main point, and even the informal discussion might bring in some evidence that is clarified by a bit of discussion: “This kitchen costs $X, and that other one costs $Y, and since he tends to break things, we don't think it's necessary to get such an expensive one.” This has all the basics of a formal academic essay, only in an informal mode of presentation.

Given these structural similarities, the main difference between the results of informal and formal research lies in the depth of information presented, and the way in which it is presented to its audience. Formal essays will probably discuss an issue in much more depth, giving more evidence and more involved explanations of that evidence, than will an informal piece of research-based writing. Assumptions about audience are a major contributing factor to this difference. If you are writing to or explaining for a family member or friend, you can probably make some assumptions about what they know, based on the fact that they know you and the way that you think or the values you hold. Formal essays, on the other hand, can make fewer assumptions about audience knowledge. Often you can make some assumptions about what basic professional or cultural knowledge they may have, but after that point, the known similarities may end. Readers, even ones in your professional field, may have a different specialty than the one you are looking into, or different ideas about what is important in the field, or even just a different background that
makes it more difficult for them to engage with certain ideas you may bring up. In the end, this means that you have more of a gap to bridge between yourself and an academic audience. Things that people who know you would already know, or conclusions that your friends and family would easily understand without explanation, will have to be explained to the more general academic audience. They will not be able to fill in the gaps in your logical path, so you will have to do it yourself through additional discussion and evidence. This is what tends to make research essays so long in comparison to more informal discussions of research: filling in those gaps requires many more words than you might otherwise use! This can be a little confusing sometimes; you may feel as though you're being repetitive when really, the repetition is only occurring in your head, because the evidence you brought in does not speak for itself in the way that you think. The value of the explanation will come clear, however, when your readers do not have to ask you questions about what you meant in various spots.

Looking at the research essay project from this angle, hopefully, makes it seem a bit less daunting. It is very similar to informal research that you do every day, so it should not in essence be something alien to your everyday experience. With this sense of the familiar in mind, it is time to move on to the beginning of the process: finding a topic and developing it into an issue or problem that can be investigated.

**Finding a Suitable Topic**

Motivation and interest are major factors in finding a topic to write on, but essays assigned in classes do have other restrictions on them. The most effective way to find a topic, therefore, can be to look for a subject in which your personal interests and
professional or academic concerns can meet. For instance, if you are working on a degree in psychology, and you have experienced what it is like to have a family member who suffers from a specific psychological disorder, it might be interesting for you to research that disorder as not only a way of furthering your knowledge in your professional field, but also as a way to better understand what is going on with your family. If you are an English major, and have a particular author that you very much enjoy reading in your “off” time, consider ways that you could investigate that author or his/her works for your research project. There are many different ways that our personal and professional lives can intersect, so take advantage of them!

Even if you cannot find a way to bring personal interests into professional questions, you can still make use of those personal interests to find a research topic in which you will have enough interest to write a substantial essay. Think about things going on in your life, or local controversies being discussed in your local newspaper or on local news shows: how do these issues intersect with larger national or global concerns? These sorts of “glocal” or global-local issues, that affect you directly but that have ramifications for a larger segment of the population, will probably be the best sorts of issues to research in terms of finding both something that matters to you personally, but that will also have enough general application that sources pertinent to the discussion will be present in the research databases.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH QUESTION

No matter how you arrive at the topic, the next step will be to develop a research question about the topic. The research question should be:

- **open-ended:** it should require more than a yes or no answer
- **focused:** it should investigate a particular aspect of the topic
• **objective:** it should be phrased in such a way that a “correct” or “expected” answer is not immediately obvious

A research question that fits these guidelines will narrow the topic enough to make it manageable without actually constricting the question and constraining you into a particular response. There always needs to be a bit of wiggle room left in a research question, even if you already think you know what claim you want to make. Often we will start our research thinking about the topic in one way, but will learn something new in the research that makes us change our minds about our approach to the topic. *Always leave yourself room to change your thesis.* Getting locked into a thesis that you believe to be less than accurate is a sure-fire way to make writing the essay itself immensely painful, so do everything you can to avoid restricting yourself in this way at the beginning of the research process.

Keeping those guidelines in mind, the next step toward finding a research question is actually to start doing some basic background research. Begin by figuring out what you know about the topic, and then fill in any gaps you may have on the basics by looking at more general sources. This is a place where that Terrible Forbidden Source, Wikipedia, can be useful. Wikipedia is *not* a good source for specific or debatable information, but it *is* a good source for basic historical or factual information, so if you need to fill in some gaps, consider using Wikipedia or another encyclopedia-style source. Once you know the basics of the topic, start investigating that basic information for potential sources of conflict. Does there seem to be disagreement about particular aspects of the topic? For instance, if you're looking at a Civil War battle, are there any parts of the battle that historians seem to argue about? Perhaps some point to one figure's failing as a reason for a loss, and some point instead to another figure's spectacular success as a reason his side won? If you are writing on a piece
of literature, is there a spot in the work that has some puzzling events or plot twists that capture your attention? Whatever the conflicts, focus on those as fruitful spots out of which you might be able to pull a research question. Conflict breeds disagreement, and disagreement brings on questions that are worth investigating.

**Table 1.2: Your Turn**

In preparation for the Week 2 Research Proposal, begin working through some ideas for topics and research questions. Begin by identifying two topics, one from your professional or academic context, and one from your personal “glocal” context that you think might keep you interested and engaged for the full eight weeks of this class. Next, identify at least two possible points of conflict for each topic from which you might develop a research question.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

In addition to choosing a topic, you must also make some other decisions about your research project now at its beginning. Though these will not become immediately relevant to the work you are doing until later on in the process, it is best to begin thinking about them now before you get too far in. Considering them at the start of the process may save you some confusion and frustration later on.

**DIFFERENT MODES OF ARGUMENT**

You may remember from previous writing classes that there are different ways you can frame a discussion of a topic. For instance, in ENGL101, you wrote a number of essays, focusing on strategies like definition, exposition, and causal analysis. Those of you who have
taken ENGL102 as well also gained experience with different approaches such as the Toulmin argument, the Rogerian argument, and the middle ground argument. These different frames and approaches can get a bit confusing, particularly as they can overlap, and one can write an evaluative essay on a Toulmin model, or a cause and effect essay with a middle ground thesis. However, these can be simplified into five basic types: definition arguments, factual arguments, causal arguments, evaluative arguments, and problem/solution arguments.

### Table 1.3: Types of Arguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Basic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Attempts to define a particular idea or concept. An example of this might be a history essay arguing that World War II can be seen as a “just war.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Makes an argument that something not currently acknowledged as fact should be. A well-known example of this can be found in the debate about whether or not global warming is occurring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>Focuses on a cause or effect of some event or action, creating an argument about some specific ramifications of that cause or effect. For instance, a cause and effect essay looking at the effects of the recent very destructive tornadoes might investigate the effect that those tornadoes have had on population increases or declines in the affected areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>Focuses on evaluating something in relation to a particular set of criteria. An essay evaluating a poem, for instance, might compare it to other poems of the same time period to see how its approach to the concerns of the time is similar or different from the other poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem/Solution</td>
<td>Describes a specific problem and argues for a particular solution to that problem. For example, an essay that describes the problems that Florida is having with escaped pythons and boa constrictors, and proposes a solution for alleviating the problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No matter what argument you are making, it will fit somehow into one of these types. Though your claim may be constructed to fit one particular form, you will probably notice that in your actual essay, you use bits and pieces of the others. The problem/solution argument on invasive snakes in Florida, for instance, might use a bit of factual argument to establish the problem, and include some discussion of what has caused these snakes to be released into the wild. Its main focus, however, would be arguing for its proposed solution.

Table 1.4: Your Turn

Your Turn

Think about the possible research questions you have developed during your preliminary research. Which of these types of arguments would be the most effective for each? Think also about your past experience. Have you had more experience with any specific type of argument, and are you more comfortable with some than you are with others?

CITATION AND FORMATTING STYLES: MLA, APA, AND CHICAGO

Aside from research projects generally, citation and formatting styles seem to be one of the aspects of writing that cause student writers the most headaches. Even in one single university, you will be required to learn anywhere from two to four different styles, depending on the classes you take. Each style has its own guidelines for formatting essays and its own picky and very specific ways of formatting by in-text citations and reference lists. Why on earth are there so many? In his book on the history of writing at the university level, Professor David Russell points out that increasing professional specialization in the
nineteenth century led to a fragmentation of the writing and communication styles of educated people. Different professional groups—doctors, lawyers, humanities professors, scientists—began to develop their own specialized language and writing styles (4-5). This led, in turn, not only to the different writing “styles” as we know them now, but also to splits in the kind of language and phrasing used by different professional disciplines. It is important to keep in mind that, painful and annoying as changing writing styles can be, these are actually not different sets of rules that instructors have invented in order to torment and frustrate students. The blame for that torment and frustration should instead lie on the different professional organizations that created not only the styles, but also the different ways of approaching research and the writing that describes and discusses that research.

In some ways, these different styles and types of discourse are necessary. Each professional discipline tends to have its own specific concerns and ideals that can be seen in the way that it asks its adherents to write and to format their writing. This is visible in the writing styles of members of that discipline—writers in the social sciences use a different rhetorical style than writers in the humanities—and is even more visible in the essay formatting and citations styles themselves. Essay formatting will show differences in terms of what headers are included and how they are formatted, how pagination is formatted, whether or not a title page is included and how it is arranged, and how section titles, if used, are formatted. In addition, the list of references will be arranged differently depending on the style used.

Citation formatting is interesting in that it actually reveals information about what characteristics the professional styles prioritize in their sources. Each values something different, and that shows in both the in-text citations and the formatting of the full
bibliographic information given at the end of the essay.

**Table 1.5: Documentation Styles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Citation Characteristics</th>
<th>What Those Characteristics Show</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APA (American Psychological Association), used by the social sciences</td>
<td>Dates figure prominently in APA citations, appearing in in-text citations, and at the beginning of the Reference list entries.</td>
<td>Whether or not a source is current is important in the social sciences; much of what is published in the social sciences is studies and evaluations of studies, and newer studies or evaluations can take the place of old ones, so it is important to be able to see quickly when a study was published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA (Modern Languages Association), used by literature and languages scholars</td>
<td>Author names and titles of works are most prominent in MLA citations.</td>
<td>Dating is much less important in MLA format than in APA. MLA citation is more concerned with showing who is doing the writing and what they are writing about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Manual of Style, used by humanities other than literature and language such as history and music</td>
<td>Uses endnotes or footnotes that contain all citation information for that source: author, title, publication place, publisher, date of publication, and where in the source the material appears. A bibliography is also required, and lists not only works that were cited in the essay, but works consulted when writing the essay, even if they are not mentioned in the essay.</td>
<td>Chicago style allows readers to get the full information quickly, without necessarily having to flip out of the essay to a bibliography. It is also more concerned than the other styles with the indirect influence of sources on a writer's work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What style you use in this class will depend on the field your topic fits into. If you are writing on a literary topic, you will use MLA. If you are writing a logistics essay, you will use APA. A history essay should be in Chicago. If you are unsure what field your topic fits into,
check with your instructor. See the following table for a brief comparison of how the same source looks formatted in the three different styles. The work being cited is Benjamin Franklin's “Speech in the [Constitutional] Convention, at the Conclusion of Its Deliberations,” as it appears in the textbook being used for an American Literature class.

**Table 1.6: Citation Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation Style</th>
<th>In-text Citation</th>
<th>Reference formatting</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parenthetical citation only: (Franklin 2011)</td>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parenthetical citation only: (Franklin 128)</td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking carefully at these different formats of the same source, some differences are easy to spot, while some are a bit more subtle. Differences are visible, however, and with a bit of careful observation, you should be able to spot them.

When it comes to writing in these different styles, the best way to approach the formatting is to use a style guide. Unless you have some definite reason to need to memorize the styles, do not do so deliberately—attempting to memorize all the different requirements for different kinds of sources is an exercise in frustration. Usually, once you have been using a particular style for a significant amount of time, you will begin to passively memorize the formats for the kinds of sources you use the most frequently. Until this happens, just consult an up-to-date style guide for the formatting information that you need. If you do not have a print style guide on hand, you are encouraged to visit the APUS Library as it has a number of citation style guides. These are updated regularly and provide easily accessible, current information on citation format.

Table 1.7: Your Turn

Your Turn

Each chapter in this textbook follows one of the three styles discussed here in formatting its citations. Page through the book, comparing the citations used to the chart here, and see if you can figure out what style is being used in which chapter.
CLOSING THOUGHTS

This chapter has covered some information that should help you to get started on your research project. As you're preparing to write your research proposal, consider going through the different stages discussed, and giving yourself a choice of different topics and research questions to choose from. Also remember to keep an open mind as you work on the project; it's natural for the initial working thesis to evolve and change as the project develops.

REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED


ESSAY TEMPLATES

APA TEMPLATE

Faulkner and Stream of Consciousness 1

Faulkner and Stream of Consciousness

John Smith

Course Title/Number

Professor XYZ

Date
John T. Matthews (1991) writes in his book, *The Sound and the Fury: Faulkner and the Lost Cause*: "it may seem artificial or even redundant to" discuss "Faulkner's technique" (p. 106). There is no shortage of criticisms regarding William Faulkner's literary style. He brings to literature an opportunity to engage his readers differently than anyone before or after him. Faulkner's style is to have the reader associate with the character by listening to the character's (often the narrator's) speech. He cleverly lets the reader discover the characters' weaknesses, strengths, personality traits, motivations, desires, instabilities, et cetera, through his unique narrative style which foregrounds stream of consciousness.

Stream of consciousness can take on many forms, one of which is the lack of punctuation in a narrative. Frye (1957) includes in his definition of stream of consciousness techniques as "unorthodox punctuation...unusual capitalization...frequent italics...or sometimes a lack of punctuation or of distinguishing typefaces altogether" (p. 444). One example of this type of narration exists in "The Bear." Part 4 of "The Bear" is of Ike recounting the history of the McCaslin land and home. This section lacks punctuation and narrative clarity making it more difficult to read than some of the other Faulkner pieces.
References


MLA ESSAY TEMPLATE

John Smith
Professor XXXXX
Course Number/Title
Date

Faulkner and Stream of Consciousness

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Works Cited


CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE TEMPLATE

Faulkner and Stream of Consciousness

John Smith

Course Number/Title
Professor XYZ
Date
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Works Cited


CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH PROPOSALS AND THESIS STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Too often the words “research paper” strike fear into the hearts of even the bravest men and women. Soldiers willing to dodge bullets on a daily basis, pilots willing to fly planes under intense enemy fire, and grunts who endure the physical and mental duress of basic training have been known to cringe at the thought of producing a written work of ten pages. For some it is the dreaded thought of having to find resources to support their ideas. For others it is the nuances of formatting that seem more tedious than the periods of boredom in wartime.

Why is there so much trepidation? The truth is, writing can be hard work, but with adequate tools and planning, even less experienced students can be successful. Like anything, producing a significant paper takes forethought and preparation. No soldier goes to war without training. No writer should plunge ahead without giving thought to both the big picture and the minor details.

This chapter will give you tools to prepare for the writing process. It will provide you with information about how to use the modern-day library—online databases—for the purposes of research. It also walks you through the preliminary stages of research, such as choosing and narrowing a topic, doing a preliminary search of sources, developing research questions, creating a working thesis, and putting together a research proposal.
SEARCH ENGINES AND DATABASES

Everyone has used Google, but do the results found there provide academic material? For the most part, the answer is no, but when solid sources are found it is usually after much time and deliberation over credibility.

Open search engines, which are accessible by everyone, have some value in that they can give you a sense of the topic, but sifting through the virtual mountains of sources to determine which are reliable and useful eats up quite a bit of your precious time. Some open search tools are better than others. Google Scholar is an open engine that focuses on more academic works, but some articles may not be available. Other open sites that may be useful are:

- Federal Digital System: America’s Authentic Government Information
- International Relations and Security Network
- Social Science Research Network
- iSeek Education topics

For more information about open web searching, its limitations, and a few tips, go to the APUS Library’s section on research tips.

Although open source searching has some benefits, the more efficient avenue to pursue is deep web searching. This is the closed collection of scholarly and reputable resources, often accessible only through subscription or password. As an APUS student, you have the privilege of being able to access literally millions of articles. You probably have not completely cemented your topic yet because you want to make sure you have enough source material to produce a substantial project. Conducting a Preliminary Search of
sources will give you a sense of what you can expect. The most efficient way to find out what scholars are saying about topics in your field is to visit the databases.

**Databases** are collections of articles from vast numbers of journals. In the not-too-distant past, university students would physically visit the library and explore the dark part of the library known as “the stacks,” where these journals were kept in hard-copy format. Thanks to technology, you can retrieve relevant articles with your fingertips without trudging through a bewildering sea of call numbers and musty periodicals. You will find these sources under Articles and Database in the APUS Library.

*Reliability and credibility* are the hallmarks of database articles. While open Google searches might give you a sense of the topic and what to explore further—just as an encyclopedia article might—the database articles will give you insight into the details of the issue, the results of specific experiments and studies. Database access not only exists at the university level, but through public libraries and many high schools as well. You can access materials that you would have to pay for on the open web. The database *suites* (collection of databases) of ProQuest and EBSCO Suite seem to be most popular.

Databases exist for every academic field. Which ones you use depend on your topic. Proquest and EBSCO are great places to start, but un-check any databases within them that clearly have no relevance to your topic. The database and database suites currently used by APUS include these (additional suites may be in use so additional exploring of the library or contacting an APUS librarian is recommended):

**EBSCO Suite contains:**

- Academic Search Premier (multi-disciplinary database)
- Applied Science and Technology Source
- Business Source Complete
• CINAHL Complete (nursing and health journals)
• Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text
• eBook Collection (EBSCO Host)
• Education Research Complete (also known as ERIC)
• Environment Complete
• GreenFile (environmentally-related)
• Health and Psychosocial Instruments
• Health Policy Reference Center
• International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center
• MEDLINE Complete
• Regional Business News (articles from various regions across US)
• Science Reference Center
• SportDiscus with Full Text (sports and sports medicine journals)

The JSTOR database is a multi-discipline clearinghouse for scholarly articles.

The ProQuest Suite holdings span psychology, business, nursing, and others. Other specific databases linked on the main Article and Database page address history, sports law, poetry, communications, security issues, and many more.

**NAVIGATION**

Just as different car companies have particular styles, each database is set up differently. This is because they are composed and run by different entities. APUS doesn’t own them; APUS subscribes to them. This is where some students have experienced frustration. Get to know the databases that work best for your field. Many have tools to aid your research. Some useful ones are:
• Full-text journals only: Using this tool will restrict your search to articles that are fully available. It will prevent sources that have only an abstract (summary) from showing up in your searches. This is highly recommended to alleviate your frustration level!

• Scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals only: highly recommended

• Date slider: so that you can choose more recent references

• Folders: for saving articles for future reference

• Source types: articles, newspapers

• Suggested Subjects (after you type in your initial search term)

• Search by publication name: if you have a particular journal in mind

• Narrow Publications List

• My Research Account: a ProQuest feature to keep track of sources, RSS feeds, customize settings, and more

**RESEARCH GUIDES**

Scholars in your field at APUS have generated lists of specific databases and even specific sources that they have consistently found relevant. If you have wandered through the database list and still are not sure where to begin, go to the Research Guides. Using the tabs on each portal page, you can view recent articles as well as suggested journals to explore. Use these guides to your advantage! APUS librarians have put these together for your benefit.

**USING BOOLEAN TERMS**

Boolean operators are words and phrases that can help you come up with efficient search term combinations.
**Boolean Operators:** The first tip is to combine your keywords and phrases with the Boolean operators “AND,” “OR,” and “NOT” to improve the relevancy of your search results. You can do this either manually, by typing them in, or by using separate search boxes and selecting the appropriate operator from the dropdown menus.

- **AND:** AND Narrows a search because ALL terms must be found in an article in order for it to appear in your results list. You can use AND to combine different concepts such as “politics” and “youth.” In this case, your search results will only include articles that contain both terms.

![Venn Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 2.1:** A computer screenshot shows. The one on the left is labeled “politics;” the one on the right is labeled “youth.” The area of overlap in the middle is indicated by a red arrow.

- **OR:** OR broadens a search because articles only have to have one of your terms in order to appear in your search results list. OR is particularly helpful when you are searching for synonyms, such as “death penalty” OR “capital punishment.”
Figure 2.2: A Venn diagram shows two circles which slightly overlap in the middle. The circle on the left is labeled “death penalty; the circle on the right is labeled “capital punishment.” No outline is drawn around the two circles indicating that both or either topic can be included in any search result.

- **NOT:** NOT narrows your search by eliminating all articles from your search results that contain a specific term(s). So if you are looking for articles that talk about sex education but that do not focus on abstinence-only sex education, you could try searching for “sex education” NOT abstinence-only.

Figure 2.3: A Venn diagram shows two circles. The circle on the left is labeled “sex education,” the one on the right is labeled “abstinence-only.” The circle on the right slightly covers the one on the left, but does not suggest a shared area between the two circles. This indicates that the two search terms should be exclusive of each other.

- **Complex Searches:** You can also combine Boolean statements. In addition to using the dropdown menus to the left of the search boxes, you can type the Boolean operators directly into the search boxes. For example:
Figure 2.4: A screenshot of a search in the Academic Search Premier databases shows the following in a search box: “youth OR adolescents OR teen*.” Below are dropboxes where the search is refined: “and politic*,” “and participation.”

**STEPS FOR BEGINNING YOUR SEARCH**

Now that you know what the databases are and why they are essential for academic research, keep in mind these steps for using your own search terms.

1. Identify a few search terms related to your topic and generate several synonyms for each.
2. Using Boolean operators (and, or, but not), put your search term(s) into a database.
3. If results are too numerous, try altering your search terms. When you find a good article, look at the subject terms by which it is categorized. These are also known as descriptors or tags.
4. Put subject terms into search box.
5. Select scholarly journals/peer-reviewed option if available. Limit the time frame if integral to your topic.
6. View the returned list of articles, click on some, and read the abstracts.
7. For the articles that look promising, explore their catalogue terms so that you can search by those terms as well.

**SAMPLE WALK-THROUGH**

**Topic:** embedded anthropologist, war and social science
Databases chosen: EBSCO Suite, specifically the Academic Search Premier and International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center

Search results:

Figure 2.5: A computer screenshot shows the first two search results from the first of three pages of results for the search "embedded anthropologist" in the EBSCO Academic Search Premier International Security and Counter Terrorism Reference Center database.

By going to “Refined Results” and clicking Full Text Only and Scholarly Journals on the left, the results were reduced to 20 sources. The dates were 1998-2010. The first source looks promising:
Figure 2.6: A computer screenshot shows a search result for the embedded anthropologist EBSCO search. The title of the article is "Counterinsurgency and terror expertise: the integration of social scientists into the war effort" from the Cambridge Review of International Affairs, June 2010. Subject terms listed for the article are counterinsurgency, military art & science, research, social science research, anthropologists, terrorism, and intellectuals. A PDF full text link is available at left.

Note that the subject terms (descriptors) that came up were counterinsurgency, military art and science, research, social science research, terrorism, intellectuals. I could pursue this topic with some of these search terms. Other related topics emerged when I clicked open the PDF file.

**THINKING ABOUT SOURCES**

As you start your preliminary search of sources, determine the types of sources you need for your project. Primary sources are first-hand accounts or articles that were written at the time of the event. For instance, an April 15, 1912, newspaper article about the Titanic's catastrophe would be considered a primary account. Likewise, a survivor's testimony would be primary information. In addition, surveys, experiments, and interviews are primary, first-
hand sources.

Secondary sources, on the other hand, are written after the events and often offer an interpretation of these events rather than just facts. Encyclopedia articles, journal articles, and non-fiction books are typical secondary sources.

There is even such a thing as third-hand, tertiary sources. These are reports of reports on a topic. Since they are far removed from the original observations and facts, they are not considered viable material for a research project. Wikipedia is an illustration of a tertiary source; its use is highly discouraged in academia. Even so, it can useful just as an encyclopedia is useful: to give you an overview of the material before you really begin your research. It may even refer you to some helpful sources.

Which kinds of sources should you use? Though it depends on your topic, try to incorporate at least a few primary sources in your projects. The secondary sources will give you various interpretations and will help you formulate a well-rounded opinion on your subject matter. For example, suppose you were writing about the communication pitfalls that occurred among emergency responders on September 11. A primary source would be quoted comments from a first responder a September 12 newspaper or online news article. Such quotations provide potent and visceral insight. A secondary source—also valuable—would be the 9/11 Commission Report, which uncovered and analyzed findings about missteps that occurred before 9/11 and patterns during the event.

**Primary source tip:** If possible, include an interview from a professional in your field or conduct a survey.

More information about primary and secondary sources can be found in [University of North Carolina’s Evaluating Print Sources](#).
Table 2.1: Your Turn

Your Turn

Explore some topics of interest to you, ones that fit your research assignment. For COLL300, you will be proposing a solution to a problem in your field, so examine some articles in the databases. Jot down a list of possible problems that are current issues.

Finding a Focus

When you go to a professional sports event, concert, or event at a large venue, your ticket has three items on it: the section, the row, and the seat number. You go in that specific order to pinpoint where you are supposed to sit. Similarly, when you decide on a topic, you often start large and must narrow the focus; you move from general subject, to a more limited topic, to a specific focus or issue.

For example, suppose you want to explore the topic of autism. You might move from:

- **General topic:** special needs in a classroom
  - **Limited topic:** autistic students in a classroom setting
    - **Specific focus:** how technology can enhance learning for autistic students

The breadth of your focus may depend on the length of the final paper. The important thing is to be able to move beyond “overview” mode so that you can zoom in on the details of your topic. The reader does not want a cursory look at the topic; she wants to walk away with some newfound knowledge and deeper understanding of the issue. For that, details are essential.
Table 2.2: Your Turn

Brainstorm how you can narrow the topics you wrote down in the Your Turn exercise above.

REMEMBERING YOUR PURPOSE

The purpose of your paper is to present a problem and identify the best solution for that problem. As you consider the issues in your field, there are questions that will help you give deeper thought to the rhetorical situation (subject, purpose, audience):

1. What is the situation or problem?
2. Who is causing that problem?
3. Who is affected by the problem?
4. What has been done to try to address this problem?
5. Who is or should be responsible for addressing or solving this problem?

MOVING ON: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FORMING A WORKING THESIS STATEMENT

DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Once you have narrowed your topic so that is manageable, it is time to generate research questions about your topic. Create thought-provoking, open-ended questions, ones that encourage debate. Decide which question addresses the issue that concerns you—that will be your main research question. Secondary questions will address the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the issue. As an example:
**Main question:** Does the media stereotype women in such a way that women do not believe they can be leaders?

**Secondary questions:** How can more women get involved in politics? Why aren’t more women involved in politics? What role do media play in discouraging women from being involved? How many women are involved in politics at a state or national level? How long do they typically stay in politics, and for what reasons do they leave?

These questions will propel the writer’s research. Make sure that your question (a) is narrow or broad enough for your project’s parameters; (b) will likely yield scholarly sources and discussion; (c) is likely to interest the reader; and (d) interests you enough to keep you engaged for the duration of the project.

Tip: Choose your topic carefully and deliberately. Writers always write better when they truly care about their topics.

**Creating a Working Thesis**

Next, “answer” the main research question to create a thesis statement. The thesis statement is a single sentence that identifies the topic and shows the direction of the paper while simultaneously allowing the reader to glean the writer’s stance on that topic.

**Table 2.3: Thesis Statement Functions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A working thesis</strong> performs four main functions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Narrows the subject to the single point that readers should understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Names the topic and makes a significant assertion about that topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conveys the purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Provides a preview of how the essay will be arranged (usually).

Why is a thesis statement so important? It is the “one main thing” that you want your readers to walk away with. It also lays the foundation of the paper, giving readers a sense of where the paper is going. It can be considered a compass or even a map for this same reason. The thesis is conventionally found in the last part of the introduction, after the attention-getter and transitional lines. It closes the introduction and sets up the rest of the paper.

The thesis you compose early in the research process is a working thesis. That is, expect it to evolve over the next several weeks as you read about your topic. You may refine its angle or even its purpose, or you may find more accurate and efficient wording to convey your point.

*The thesis focuses on the relationship between its elements.* Thesis statements will vary in construction in order to support a purpose, and the ensuing pattern of the essay is often a reflection of the thesis. The thesis for a cause-effect paper would show the cause-effect relationship. The thesis for a comparison-contrast paper would identify the subjects of comparison and suggest that they are more similar or more different. In COLL300 you will be identifying a problem in your field that needs a solution. The thesis, then, should mirror that.

Using the topic above, let’s examine the progress one student made on her thesis.

**Topic:** women in politics

**Main Research question:** Does the media stereotype women in such a way that women do not believe they can be leaders?

**THESIS, VERSION ONE**
Finding out how mainstream media or other factors contribute to the under-representation of women in positions of power. Discovering any possible solutions to how and why people think about the images they see in the media and compare it to the effect it has on women and girls’ ability to see themselves as leaders by others in power.

Does reading this tire you out? This is packed with ideas, but it needs some work, namely:

- It should be a complete sentence, not a list of sentence fragments.
- It should be ONE sentence.
- The single sentence should contain both the problem and solution elements.

**THESIS, VERSION TWO**

*Media contributes to the under-representation of women in positions of power, and to change this trend, the media treatment of women candidates needs to be more issue driven instead of driven by the sex of the candidate. The political parties insist that the media treat their male and female candidates equally and fairly and encourage better-qualified candidates to run for office.*

Now this statement:

- Still has two sentences instead of one
- Does not address what “equally and fairly” would look like
- Is wordy

The student then took the instructor’s advice of using the first line as the thesis and eliminating wordiness:

**THESIS, VERSION THREE**
Media contributes to the under-representation of women in positions of power, and to change this trend, the media treatment of women candidates needs to be more issue driven instead of driven by the sex of the candidate, gender driven.

Contained in one sentence, the problem aspect and a possible solution are represented clearly. The paper itself can explore what the solution might look like.

Let’s examine it according to the four functions of a thesis:

1. **Does it narrow the subject?** Yes, the writer wants to reduce media’s negative influence on women in politics.

2. **Does it name the topic and make an assertion?** Yes, the assertion is that media contributes to women’s under-representation in positions of power. It also asserts that media should be more issue-driven than gender-driven.

3. **Does it convey the purpose?** Yes, it identifies a problem and suggests a solution (the details of which have yet to be seen in the essay).

4. **Does it suggest the arrangement of the essay?** It suggests that she will begin by showing how the media contributes to the under-representation of women in power.
   
   It suggests that the writer will explore the solution to this—a shift of the media’s emphasis.

**ADDITIONAL EXAMINATION**

It doesn’t hurt to keep turning your thesis around in your head by asking additional questions about it. The Writing Center at University of North Carolina suggests that you ask these questions about your working thesis in order to determine its effectiveness:

1. **Do I answer the question?** Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
2. *Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?* If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.

3. *Is my thesis statement specific enough?* Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"?

4. *Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test?* If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.

5. *Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?* If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's o.k. to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.

6. *Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?* If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

Let's apply these questions to one student's idea:

**Topic:** *The use of drones in warfare*

This is not yet a thesis; it is a topic. What assertion will the writer make?

*Drones are a cost-efficient means to achieving our military goals.*
Now the writer has made an assertion: that drones are cost-efficient and can help the military achieve its goals.

- *Is this a question that others might challenge or oppose?* Yes.
- *Is this specific and narrow enough for a paper this size?* Perhaps not. “Military goals” is broad, and the reader does not know which military goal. Overall? In Afghanistan? This thesis needs more specific parameters.
- *Does this pass the “So What?” test?* Why should the reader care?

*In a post-9/11 world, the US has adapted a pre-emptive and proactive strategy to combat terrorism worldwide; however, the high price of war and a declining economy is causing defense strategists to promote a less expensive means to wage war by increasing their utilization and reliance on drone warfare.*

From this working thesis, the reader now understands the context—that the high price of war is causing military strategists to look for a more efficient way to conduct warfare. The reader cares about the money the military spends on warfare.

By the time this paper was finished several weeks later, the thesis had evolved to:

*Recent precision strikes against high value individuals are evidence that the calculated risk of the Defense and Intelligence Communities and US investment in drone-centric warfare is the solution in the fight against terrorism.*

By this point, the writer had adjusted the thesis to show the utility of drones in taking out terrorists, and there is less emphasis on the cost factor. There is a greater emphasis, however, on drones as solution to terrorism, and since the student was asked to propose a solution, this better fits the assignment.

**Another example**
One student, concerned about pre-teen and teen pregnancy in her state, worked on her solution. Her working thesis was:

_Because of the increased AIDS and sexually transmitted infection cases and common teen pregnancies, Louisiana public schools should be required to provide comprehensive, or abstinence plus, sex education to students as young as fourth grade._

This thesis:

- Addresses the research prompt of identifying a problem and proposing a solution: STI’s and teen pregnancies are the problem; comprehensive, abstinence-plus sex education is the solution.
- Is specific and provides a narrow scope: Louisiana public schools and students as young as fourth grade.
- Makes an assertion: comprehensive, abstinence-plus sex education is the solution
- Takes a position that others might oppose: (her solution)
- Passes the “So what?” test: Clearly, there is a problem with STI’s and teen pregnancy.
Table 2.4: Your Turn

You have identified a topic. What main research question are you trying to answer with your research? What do you want to assert about that topic? Once you have put the thesis in statement form, measure it against the two sets of questions above.

1. Does it narrow the subject?
2. Does it name the topic and make an assertion?
3. Does it convey the purpose?
4. Does it suggest the arrangement of the essay?

Additional questions to ask:
- Do I answer the question [if there is a prompt given]?
- Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?
- Is my thesis statement specific enough?
- Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test?
- Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?
- Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: WRITING RESEARCH PROPOSALS

After conducting some background research, forming a research question, and composing a thesis statement, it is necessary for us to organize and set a schedule for our research. Good research writing requires a plan. One way to accomplish this goal is by writing a research proposal. Composing a proposal or prospectus is a common practice for many business organizations and a necessary ingredient for effective, analytical research
writing. Not surprisingly, business proposals and research proposals share some similarities:

- Both require careful analysis of the audience of our proposal.
- Both require details in the proposal.
- Both require an explanation of methods and procedures.
- Both require a timeline.
- Both require a request for approval.

Your research proposal will help you clarify your goal and will indicate to your instructor that you have given careful thought to the topic and its implications.

**PROPOSAL FEATURES**

1. **Background**: introduce your idea and explain why it is worth pursuing.
2. **Description**: Identify the central concern, the main and secondary research questions, your working thesis, and your goals for the project.
3. **Methods and procedures**: Discuss how you will go about getting information about your topic. Where will you look? Do you have any primary sources, and if so, what are they (see discussion earlier in this chapter)? What are your secondary sources so far? Put these in a working bibliography in the format of your major. What note taking methods will you employ, and how will you keep track of your sources?
4. **Schedule**: Guided by course assignment deadlines, decide when you will take notes on materials and when you will compose your paper. Some people alternate back and forth; some do all the note taking up front. Shoot for a 50-50 spread of your time on these tasks, keeping in mind the various assignment due dates.
5. **Approval**: ask your instructor for feedback and for approval for this proposal.
Background: Infrastructure is essential to the successful transportation of goods and services. Without one you cannot have the other. Infrastructure in America is aging and is unfit for the modern transportation requirements in our current economy. Bridges, highways, railroads, airports, and seaports must be upgraded to support the increased amount of traffic which traverses them in the millions of tons daily.

Description: My concern is that America’s transportation infrastructure is in dire need of quality control inspections. These inspections are a critical step in requisitioning major improvements, leading to our nation’s success as a world power. Businesses of all sorts rely on moving their goods and services from point A to point B in a safe and timely manner.

My main questions are, What types of problems exist in all types of transportation infrastructure? Who is responsible for maintaining and repairing the faults? My secondary questions include, How does the quality of infrastructure affect the marketplace? What role does private ownership of infrastructure play, and what role should it play? What dangers are involved in private ownership of infrastructure? How will long-term funding help alleviate this problem? The thesis statement for this
research will look something like this: In today’s highly competitive, fast paced, and ever changing global marketplace, it is the responsibility of the American public, through government funding, to improve the transportation infrastructure of pipelines, bridges, highways, railroads, airports, and seaports to facilitate the free-flow of commerce.

**Methods and procedures:** I plan to investigate specific problem areas within each type of transportation infrastructure. Researching this topic will take me to various federal, state, and local departments of transportation websites, as well as approved journals and articles on the deep web. I will utilize quotes from experts in the field of logistics and engineering, which will be used to identify the specific problems that exist and what should be done to remedy those. The tools I plan on using most is the EBSCO Academic Search Premier, LexisNexis, and the APUS Library because they are all jam packed full of great peer reviewed sources, very easy to use the citation help, and I really liked the advanced search functions to narrow my searches down.

**Secondary sources:**

http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy1.apus.edu/hottopics/lnacademic


infrastructure and land use planning. *Civil Engineering* (08857024), 78(8), 28-30.

**Schedule:** My proposed schedule for composing my research paper and submitting it for grading is listed by each week as follows:

- **Week 2:** Submit proposal, draft thesis statement, and create outline.
- **Week 3:** Identify primary and alternate bibliographical resources. Start taking notes.
- **Week 4:** Complete drafting of all paragraphs.
- **Week 5:** Conduct further analysis and research. Add additional quantifying information to research paper.
- **Week 6:** Ensure all citations and formatting are accurate and precise according to the APA style I plan on using. Possibly submit paper to two friends, family, or classmates for peer review.
- **Week 7:** Refine research paper based on peer review.
- **Week 8:** Submit final research paper to instructor for grading.

With your permission, I would like to continue with my plan to identify problem areas in America’s transportation infrastructure and solicit ways to impose a revolution in repairs and improvements. It is a rather large issue in all, but in isolating specific problems and proposing solutions to those that exist, in the future, I will be better prepared to solicit assistance through my local authorities for making changes to our infrastructure needs. The bottom line is that it is important to have a good infrastructure in place for safety purposes and is paramount to shipping goods and services in a timely manner to stay competitive in today’s global marketplace.
CLOSING THOUGHTS

Creating a successful research paper is not something to be feared, but it should involve deliberate choices at the beginning of the process. A preliminary search of sources can inform you about the quality and quantity of sources available on your topic. Brainstorming research questions and choosing and narrowing a topic to a working thesis statement will propel you in the right direction. Finally, putting these elements together in a research proposal demonstrates that you have given careful and critical thought to your project.

REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED


CHAPTER 3: ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS:
ACADEMIC HONESTY, CRITICAL THINKING,
RHETORICAL ANALYSIS, AND WRITING SURVEYS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the questions we ask ourselves as readers, writers, and scholars and the questions we ask a target audience to develop primary research.

PLAGIARISM

Writing in general and research writing specifically involves questions: What is my topic? Who is my audience? What is my purpose? Within the myriad of questions you ask yourselves as writers, the most important one should be, “Am I an honest writer?” Before you put pen or pencil to paper or fingers to keyboard, you need to consider your commitment to honest communication, and you need to understand what constitutes dishonest writing and Why We Cite Sources. You can begin by reviewing the University’s policy on Plagiarism and the Consequences of Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism, committed intentionally or unintentionally, is a serious academic and social offense. Plagiarism is not a victimless crime; in addition to the plagiarized author, plagiarism hurts the University, its students, and the plagiarist.

As students, you must trust that your professors will provide you with the best education they are capable of, that they will give you timely and honest feedback, that they will disseminate correct information, and that they will facilitate your learning process. Similarly, your professors and instructors must be able to trust that the work you are
submitting is your work, that you have made an honest effort to complete the assignment
yourself, and that you have not taken someone else’s work and attempted to pass it off as
your own. If the trust between students and their professors is broken, the credibility of the
University is diminished and with it the value of your degree.

Plagiarism also hurts your fellow students, not simply by diminishing the credibility of
the University, but also by robbing them of a professor’s time and energy. The time and
effort required to track, substantiate, and report suspected plagiarism cases is time taken
away from honest, hard-working students.

Lastly, while the plagiarist may think he has taken the expedient course in choosing
to steal information for an assignment, the truth is that a student with a college degree is
expected to possess a certain level of subject area knowledge and expertise in writing. In
failing to complete her assignments honestly, the plagiarist is denying herself an education
and ultimately will carry the consequences of that choice even if the plagiarism goes
undetected.

The author of the original document is also a victim of the plagiarist. The plagiarized
author is an author whose words and thoughts are stolen; an author whose voice has been
silenced. Plagiarism is theft; it is stealing someone else’s thoughts and words and passing
them off as your own. Be careful to document all your sources on a works cited or reference
page and within your essays.

Because plagiarism is so serious, it is important that you take the time to understand
thoroughly what it is and how to avoid it. Hacker offers the following definition:
Let us examine each part of the definition.

**Failing to Cite Quotations or Borrowed Ideas and Failing to Enclose Borrowed Language in Quotation Marks**

Whenever you quote, paraphrase, or summarize material from a source, you need to give credit to the original author. Generally speaking, this credit will come in the form of a signal phrase to introduce the quote, summary, or paraphrase and an in-text citation. Each documentation style follows a set format: MLA, APA, or Chicago.

**MLA Quotation Example**

Diana Hacker and Barbara Fister define plagiarism as “[t]he unattributed use of a source of information that is not considered common knowledge” (284).

There are several elements to notice in the example above. First, notice that I have provided the author’s names in a signal phrase (Diana Hacker and Barbara Fister define)
which introduces the quoted material. Secondly, I have used quotation marks around the exact words of the authors to indicate that I have quoted from the source. Third, I have included an in-text citation in parenthesis after the quoted material. The in-text citation contains the page number where the source material can be located. Note the placement of the period AFTER the parenthesis. If my signal phrase did not include the authors’ names, my in-text citation would look like this: (Hacker and Fister 284). There are many variations on this theme so be sure that you follow the format found in a credible, up-to-date guide such as the one linked above. Automatic bibliography programs do not always get it right so use the manual required by your professor.

One last note: notice the brackets around the letter t. In the original quotation, the was capitalized; the brackets indicate that I have altered the original quote to fit my grammatical scheme.

Here is how the same quote would look in APA documentation format:

**APA Quotation Example**

Diana Hacker and Barbara Fister (2010) defined plagiarism as “[t]he unattributed use of a source of information that is not considered common knowledge” (284).

What differences do you notice between the two styles? First, you probably noticed the inclusion of a publication date. Because much of the research in social sciences is ongoing and subject to change, the date of a source has more relevance than it does in the humanities. For example, a report on AIDS would be much different today than it was in the 1980s; the same can be said for a study on terrorism. You earn extra points if you noticed
that the verb in the signal phrase (defined) changed from present to past tense. APA documentation style requires that signal phrase verbs be in the past tense.

Finally, here is the same quote in traditional Chicago style:

**Chicago Quotation Example**

Diana Hacker and Barbara Fister define plagiarism as “[t]he unattributed use of a source of information that is not considered common knowledge.”1

Like APA and MLA documentation styles, Chicago style places the quoted source material in quotation marks and recommends using a signal phrase; however, there is no direct source attribution within the research essay. Instead, the subscript after the source material will lead the reader to correspondingly numbered notes either at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or at the end of the essay (endnotes). These notes will contain the required publication information.

**Failing to Put Paraphrases and Summaries in Your Own Words**

Chapter Five presents guidelines for composing effective paraphrases and summaries so the discussion here will focus on avoiding plagiarism when paraphrasing or summarizing. Although both paraphrases and summaries are written in your own words, they still need to be cited properly. Why? Let us go back to the definition of plagiarism: failing to cite quotations or **borrowed ideas**. While the paraphrase or summary may be in your own words, **the idea** is not original and you must credit the author. The University of Richmond’s Writers’ Web offers an example of using **paraphrasing** effectively and honestly and includes a list of signal phrase verbs. Notice the number of in-text citations in the final
example; each time the sourced material is paraphrased it is followed by an in-text citation. If you are weaving borrowed material into and out of your original commentary, you must clearly identify. A single citation at the end of the paragraph may not be sufficient. The reader should be able to separate your original material from borrowed source material easily and without guessing, otherwise you may be guilty of plagiarism.

**SUBMITTING SOMEONE ELSE’S WORK AS YOUR OWN**

Cutting and pasting material from the web into your paper without proper citation or submitting a paper, or part of a paper, written by someone else is plagiarism. Often this type of plagiarism results from last minute panic and poor planning. Following the schedule outlined in your research proposal and careful note taking are the best ways to avoid becoming a plagiarist at 11:30 p.m. Sunday evening. Plan your time, plan your notes, and plan to be honest!

Even when you follow the guidelines for avoiding plagiarism, it is possible to make other mistakes with source material. Use the chart below to help you avoid these common errors.

**You might be misusing sources if:**

- your summary, paraphrase or quotation does not correctly represent the purpose and intent of the original.
- you rely too heavily on one source in particular or source material in general. Your research essay contains little original analysis.
- you have dropped source material into your research essay without using a signal phrase or following up with original analysis and commentary
- your citations do not clearly separate original from borrowed material.
Plagiarism is a serious offense and, therefore, requires serious thought and discussion. Continue the discussion by looking at these sources: Plagiarism.org and University of North Carolina Handout. As a student at APU/AMU, you also have access to Turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism resource. Turnitin works by comparing the phrasing in your assignment with the phrasing of the documents in its huge database. It gives your assignment a score, in the form of a percentage, which represents how much of your writing matches the phrasing of the writing of others. Your assignments in COLL300 may be processed in Turnitin.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

As college students, you have undoubtedly heard the terms *critical reading* and *critical thinking* often, but you might be unsure of the exact processes involved in critical reading and critical thinking. Once you have asked and answered questions concerning your own academic integrity, your next step is to re-consider your research project by asking more questions. For an insightful overview of the process, click on the following link: Critical Thinking in College Writing: From the Personal to the Academic. Initially, many of you may have been conditioned to associate the term “critical” with something negative. Not so. As the title of this chapter suggests, critical thinking is questioning. Paul and Elder, leading researchers in critical thinking, suggest re-examining the purpose and goal of your research. A clear goal is essential as you begin to work with your sources; otherwise how can you determine which information is relevant to your research? Next, consider your original research question. Is it clearly focused and precise? As you move forward in your research, you will probably need to narrow or adjust your focus as more information becomes available and you learn more about your topic. Finally, consider your perspective: from what
point of view are you approaching this project? With the core questions answered, you can begin to examine your sources.

Read your sources actively by stopping to consider the information presented to you. Interview your sources by asking questions as you read. Paul and Elder offer some guiding questions here as well. First, consider the type of information you are using (peer-reviewed journals, books) and where you located that information (library databases, open web). Questioning and verifying the quality of your sources early in your research is essential in assuring a credible end product. A more detailed discussion of evaluating your sources is presented in Chapter Five.

First, consider the title of the article. What does it reveal about the contents? About the author’s viewpoint? How is it related to your research topic? As you begin reading, continue to question the author. Why did he or she choose this example? Is this a valid example? Why did he or she choose this organization scheme? How does the author support his or her key points? What sources does the author use? What material is most important for your research? The list of questions to ask is governed only by your imagination and curiosity.

After you have read and re-read the source, you need to ask yourself some additional questions. In interpreting the source material, Paul and Elder advise you to consider the assumptions you are making and the logic of those assumptions. Finally, think about the conclusions you have drawn from your source material—are those conclusions logical? What are the implications of those conclusions? (qtd. in Crenshaw et al.).

The point here is basically simple—approach your source reading the same way a teenager approaches authority—question everything! By asking questions, you will gain a deeper understanding of the source material and eliminate sources that are not relevant or
whose credibility is dubious. Critical questioning will enable you to handle your sources with more confidence and generate a more original perspective for your paper. For more on critical reading, click on the following link: Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources. As different academic disciplines require slightly different approaches, choose one of the links below most closely related to your major to increase your understanding critical reading and writing as practiced in your field of study.

**Critical Reading and Writing across the Curriculum**

- Reading and Writing about Past Events: The Humanities and Historical Sciences
- Reading and Writing in the Social and Natural Sciences
- Reading and Writing in the Experimental Sciences
- Reading and Writing about Generalizations in Theoretical Disciplines

**RHETORICAL ANALYSIS**

With all of the questions already asked, pondered, and answered, there are still more questions to be addressed. Writing, in whatever context it is done, is communication. Often within the classroom setting, students see writing as an artificial means to an end (checking the box, collecting three credits, and moving on). To be effective, all writers must consider the rhetorical situation in which they are writing. While the term *rhetorical situation* may be unfamiliar to some of you, as effective communicators, you analyze rhetorical situations many times each day. For example, consider how your language, tone, and topic of conversation change as you move through your day. Most of you address superiors differently than you address your subordinates or peers. You make adjustments according to your rhetorical situation. Writing is no different. As writers, you must consider your audience, your purpose, your topic, and the context of your writing.
Knowing your audience is a key factor in effective writing. The language, tone, content, and style of your writing will change according to your audience. For example, an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technician in the Navy writing a report for other EOD techs can assume a shared vocabulary and knowledge. If the same EOD tech were writing for a civilian audience, he or she would need to make adjustments to content, tone, and style. Take a moment to consider how you would describe your job to an audience of elementary school children. Now think about how your presentation would change if you were addressing high school students or your classmates. In this course, your audience is your classmates; as you are composing your essay, keep in mind what you learned about your classmates in the first week and ask more questions. How much knowledge do they have about your topic? What are the best methods to present information about your topic? Will your audience respond well to visual organizers such as graphs and charts?

Understanding your audience is only the first step in analyzing your rhetorical situation. To communicate effectively you must also consider the purpose of your writing. Purpose is a key consideration not only in investigating our sources but also in relaying that information to your audience. Is our goal to persuade, to inform, or to entertain? Similar to audience, the goal of our writing will affect our tone and content. Passing the course is not the goal or objective of good writing; good writing’s goal is effective communication. The ability to clearly and effectively communicate is an expectation not only in an academic setting but in the workplace as well. Knowing what you want to accomplish through that communication is paramount. You cannot achieve a goal if you do not know what it is. Because the purpose of the research project in this class requires you to solve a problem, you will need to analyze your sources employing critical thinking and reading as described earlier in this chapter.
What you choose to write about, your topic, is also part of your rhetorical situation. Often writers start by thinking of a broad subject. For example, you may decide to write an essay on the Civil War and then finding the topic too broad for a three-thousand-word paper, narrow that topic down to the Battle of Gettysburg. You may then decide to narrow that topic further to cover one aspect of the battle, perhaps Pickett’s Charge. At each step of this decision process, you will need to consider your audience and the context of your writing. Narrowing a topic to fit audience and context is important; the narrower your focus the more detail you can provide. To understand the effects of a narrow focus, consider the difference in detail between a wide angled photograph and a tightly angled one. Consider a wide angled shot of the crowd at the Super Bowl; now consider a tightly angled shot on a single person in that crowd. The more narrow the focus, the greater the detail.

When considering and developing your topic, you must also choose a topic that allows you to say something worthwhile. If you choose a topic that has been widely written about, it may be difficult to add anything new to the conversation; you may be reduced to only re-hashing information your audience already knows. Choosing an original topic or a topic about which something original can be written is the first step in engaging readers’ interest and maintaining your own.

Finally, as a writer you need to consider the context for writing. What circumstance or event prompted the writing? As communicators, you make adjustments based on the circumstances of your communication. For example, if you are writing a letter to a friend who has just suffered a serious loss your tone will reflect that loss. In such a context, you would not send a lighthearted letter full of jokes. Similarly, academic writing adopts a formal tone and the language and style of our research papers must embrace the conventions of
Research, Analysis, and Writing

scholarly writing (Miller). Week 4 offers an in-depth discussion of the standards of academic writing.

Audience, purpose, topic, and context must be carefully considered at each stage of the writing process. Effective, successful writers think critically about these components. Effective, successful writers write to communicate, not simply to earn a grade. Click on this link to deepen your understanding of rhetorical analysis.

YOUR TURN

For a fun informative way to examine the rhetorical situation, click on the following link and follow the exercises throughout the chapter: Murder, Rhetorically Speaking

WRITING SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

At times, research writing requires you to conduct primary research in the form of a survey or an interview. Creating effective surveys and interviews requires careful thought, planning, and yes, questioning. Interviews and surveys are two ways that you can gather information about people’s beliefs or behaviors. Both are examples of primary sources.

INTERVIEWS

As you consider the purpose of your research essay, you may determine that an interview may deepen understanding for you and your audience. For example, if you are researching integration of women in the military, interviewing military women of various ranks and time in service may provide you with invaluable information. Similarly, if your research focuses on some aspect of logistics, an interview with a logistics manager may help you see the topic in fresh perspective, a perspective not always available from traditional, static research sources.
Once you decide an interview will enhance your paper, your next step is to find someone to interview. Subject matter experts on your topic or people affected by a particular issue are good choices for interviews. Keep in mind, an interview does not have to occur face-to-face; e-mail, telephone, and even instant messaging are all viable ways to conduct interviews. With the interview set, your next step is to create a series of questions, drawing on your knowledge of the topic and the interviewee. Effective interview questions require critical thinking.

**Creating Effective Interview Questions**

- Consider the purpose of the interview and its relationship to the purpose of your research.
- Ask open-ended questions, which cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Engage the interviewee in a conversation on the topic, let him or her talk, and listen carefully. Take notes even if you record (with permission) the interview.
- Prepare only eight to ten main questions and include several follow up questions for each question.
- Pay attention to the interviewee’s responses and stay flexible. You may need to adjust your follow up questions according to his or her responses.

An interview can sometimes take your research in a new direction so plan accordingly and schedule your interviews early in the research process.
**SURVEYS**

Another form of primary research, surveys are effective if you are seeking information from a large group of people. As with interviews, effective surveys require careful planning and critical thinking. Use the chart below to plan your survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating Effective Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Consider the purpose of the interview and its relationship to the purpose of your research essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Identify a specific audience for your survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Choose your survey questions carefully. Open-ended questions (Ex. Describe your exercise routine) will elicit a wide range of responses, but they can be difficult to interpret and tabulate. Closed-ended questions (multiple choice, rating scale, true/ false) are easier to tabulate and easier for respondents to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Include an introduction (who you are, what you will do with the information) and clear directions for completing the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Use headings and number your questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Test your survey and revise as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Distribute survey to target group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Tabulate your results in a chart or graph.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The processes involved in creating and conducting interviews and surveys are complex and time consuming, but the information gained from the activity can create a deeper, more engaging research essay. Continue to perfect your skills by clicking on the following links:
Survey Research and Introduction to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

This chapter began by asking you to examine your commitment to honest, intellectual research and writing. Beyond avoiding plagiarism, academic honesty should also include a sincere effort to create a final product which stimulates inquiry and adds to the knowledge base. Such a goal requires questions at every step of the process; it requires engagement and careful thought. The habit of questioning honed here is an essential skill not only for academic pursuits but as a means of solving issues confronting us in the twenty-first century. Finding the answers to the critical questions confronting us as members of a free society begins by asking the right questions, a skill practiced by academic inquiry.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For further investigation, you are invited to review the following website:

Critical Thinking Guides for Students from the Foundation for Critical Thinking:

Critical Thinking Guides.
REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED


CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL THINKING, SOURCE EVALUATIONS, AND ANALYZING ACADEMIC WRITING

INTRODUCTION

Critical analysis, critical reading, and critical writing figure prominently in the design and objectives of this course. Both this week’s forum posting and assignment require serious critical analysis. “Critical,” as we use it here, does not mean negative. A look at the origins of the word “critical” provides insight into the word’s meaning. “Critical” derives from two Greek words meaning “to separate” and “to discern.” Critical analysis, therefore, requires us to break a subject into parts, discover how those parts work together, and consider how the subject relates to other subjects. Frequently, critical analysis also involves making a judgment about a subject. In this course, as you research solutions to your problem, you will need to break those solutions down into their component parts, consider the relationship between possible solutions, and finally make a judgment as to which solution is best.

You engage in critical thinking every day. If you were researching and buying a new car, you would list some of the basic features of the cars, breaking the subject into parts. To reach a decision based on critical thinking, you would need to look at how those parts come together—the relationship—to create the vehicle, and finally, you would need to examine how this vehicle relates to (compares to) other cars. In this case, you would also form a judgment and decide to purchase one vehicle over another.
CRITICAL THINKING AS IT APPLIES TO SOURCE EVALUATION

Critical thinking is interwoven in all steps of the research process, and one of the earliest places you will use it is when you collect and evaluate your sources. You have already begun collecting sources for your project, and perhaps you even have a sense of which sources are going to be the most useful. The credibility of your research paper is a function of your sources. If you consult scholarly sources in your field, you will have a better understanding of your issue and provide a well-supported, respectable position. If, on the other hand, you consult only “soft” source material (magazines, for example), your research is going to lack the depth it needs to be convincing.

Decisions like choosing sources occur in our daily lives. Consider this example. Suppose you and your family are planning your first vacation to Disney World. You could consult a number of people to get advice on where to stay and what to do. You might talk to your best friend, who has visited Disney once. You could talk to another friend who has gone there eight times in the last ten years, staying somewhere different each time. Your first friend can offer a limited perspective; his advice might be useful but it does not give you a broad picture. Your second friend has a broader experience and can give you a sense of which places he liked best, comparing hotel features as well as price points.

With the Internet, however, there is no need to limit your sources to your friends. Trip Advisor and other sites contain hundreds if not thousands of reviews on hotels and things to do. You scroll through the reviews, noting which hotels are rated the highest and why.
Of course, you also take a look at the actual Disney website to get information about prices, availability, and proximity to the Disney parks. A customer service representative is happy to answer your questions and offer you “upgrades.”

Who will ultimately influence your decision on where to stay? Whom will you trust? You probably trust each source to some degree, though your friends’ personal, first-hand experiences might have the most impact. You trust some information on the Disney site, but you are also aware that they are chasing your hard-earned dollar and want to steer you towards packages that cost you more in the long run, even if they appear to be money-savers up front. You also consider what reviewers have said, understanding that there are always a few negative experiences among the many positive ones. Taking all this information together, you will put more faith into some sources than others. What you are doing here is analyzing and synthesizing the information you have in order to make the best decision possible.

Academic research involves a similar approach. You might consult a variety of sources but put more trust into some over others. The purpose of evaluating sources is to get a sense of:

1) Whether you can trust a source,
2) How much you can trust a source, and
3) How much you will be able to use and apply the information to your project.

**Primary versus Secondary, Popular versus Scholarly**

Chapter Two introduced you to the idea of primary sources versus secondary ones. To reiterate, **primary sources** are not defined as the ones you rely on the most; they are defined
as sources that are as close to the subject matter as possible, such as eyewitness accounts, diaries, original documents such as laws, speeches, interviews, surveys, and newspaper accounts from a particular date. In the arts, they are creative works such as plays or poems. For instance, if you were writing about the constitutionality of the Patriot Act, the Patriot Act itself or a Congressional hearing on the Patriot Act would be a primary source. If you were analyzing Hamlet as a tragic figure, the play *Hamlet* would be your primary source.

**Secondary sources** are accounts and articles written about the subject matter from a distance of time and perspective. They are commentary, reflection, and analysis of the subject matter. A book about the Patriot Act would be a secondary source, just as a current article exploring Shakespearian archetypes would be secondary.

A work’s designation as primary or secondary can change depending on how it is studied. For instance, if you were critiquing how CNN portrays humanitarian aid, CNN articles and news reports would be primary sources. If you were writing about recent humanitarian aid given to a group, then the CNN articles would be secondary sources.

Primary sources are excellent for getting to the heart of the matter. Would you rather have someone tell you about a speech and how impactful it was, or read it or see it yourself? What better way to understand a speech, law, or other document than to read it in its original form? If you can, incorporate primary sources into your material. One way to do this is through surveys and interviews, as discussed in Chapter Three.

In addition to distinguishing between primary and secondary sources, another way to start narrowing the field of available sources is to decide whether they are **scholarly** or **popular**. This is a necessary step when doing academic research. Soft articles are ones found in newspapers and magazines written for a wide, “popular” audience. Academic articles, found in journals, are used for the purposes of furthering research and are usually
read by college students and scholars. Since their audiences are different, their styles and purposes are as well.

This chart sums up the differences between popular magazines and scholarly journals well:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULAR</th>
<th>SCHOLARLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authors’ names are given, and occasionally some biographical information, but rarely credentials (degrees, professional status, expertise). You may be left wondering if the author is really an expert on the topic he or she is writing about.</td>
<td>Authors’ names, credentials and even addresses are almost always included (so that interested researchers can correspond). Authors will be experts in their fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles are written for a broad audience (written in an informal tone…people of all ages and/or levels of knowledge could read these).</td>
<td>Articles are written for experts (or college students!) in the field (lots of technical language and/or discipline specific jargon, statistical analyses, written in a formal tone).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles may have short summaries of research or news...or may even reflect the authors’ opinion (without support from data or literature).</td>
<td>Articles typically report, in great detail, the authors’ own research findings (and include support from other research)...these articles will be more than just 1 or 2 pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors don’t typically (or never) cite their sources, and don’t include a list of references at the end of the article.</td>
<td>Authors always cite their sources throughout the article, normally in conformance with a Style Manual, and include list of references at the end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Articles typically include many photographs or illustrations (often pretty to look at). Articles seldom include photographs, but may include tables or graphs of data (may seem bland at a glance).

The journal has an editor, but no strict guidelines for submission of articles, or peer review process.
The journal has very specific guidelines for articles to be published (often this information can be found on the journal’s web site), and a rigorous peer-review process (each article will list when it was submitted to the reviewers, and when it was accepted for publication...often several months apart!).

You may have wondered why *Time* magazine and *The Washington Post* do not cite their sources in their articles when you have to cite your sources in your college papers. The reason is that magazines and newspapers are not intended to be scholarly; they are popular sources meant to give a general audience (educated and uneducated) a glimpse or overview of an issue. In contrast, journal articles undergo a process called peer review that gives them additional credibility. Not every article that is submitted for peer review gets published, of course, and it is this very process that weeds out articles that have not followed a scientific, methodical process of research. Scholarly articles have gone through this process—have been reviewed by several subject-matter experts in the field—before they get published. Peer-reviewed, or scholarly articles, are the most esteemed secondary sources that you can and should use. If you were sick and hated going to the doctor, you might go to a website to diagnose yourself. But going to a doctor—a person trained to recognize, diagnose, and treat health issues—is obviously the best choice. Do not settle for less! Always consult the experts of the field you are researching.

**Tip:** Just because an article is in the databases section of the library does NOT mean that it is a peer-reviewed article. It may be reliable and credible, but not scholarly. Some
databases, such as PsychArticles and Sage Criminology, contain only peer-reviewed articles. Other databases include both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles, but there is an option to check a box for peer-reviewed results only. Take advantage of this tool!

The following is an excellent three-minute video that describes the differences between popular and scholarly sources as well: Scholarly vs. Popular Periodicals (uploaded by Peabody Library, but from Vanderbilt University—link shared in APUS Tutorial Center).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Peer Review in 5 Minutes (linked in APUS Library)

FACTORS OF SOURCE EVALUATION

Remember, the focus of this chapter is critical thinking. Professors do not want you to check your brain at the door, even at the door of a library that abounds with scholarly sources.

A set of standard questions can help you determine the trustworthiness of a source, especially if you have gleaned it from the open web. Authority (of author and publisher), accuracy, currency, and objectivity are the main criteria by which to evaluate sources.

1. Credible Author. Who is the author and what can be found out about him/her? What are her credentials? Is she an expert on this topic, and has she published anything else about it?

2. Reliable publisher. Has this source been published by a reputable publisher, trusted news source, scholarly or peer-reviewed press? Is this source available in trusted archives such as subscription databases? If this is from a website, how stable is that website? (About Us sections of sites are a starting place for information.) Use EasyWhoIs to look up who owns a particular site.
3. **Accuracy.** Does the information seem to be accurate? Does the information correspond to or contradict information found in other sources known to be reliable? Has the information been peer-reviewed? Is there a reference list available so that you can verify information?

4. **Current information.** How new is the information? If it is from a website, when was it updated? Are there working links within the website? Note: the importance of dates will vary with your subject. If you are writing about D-Day, your best source might be one from 1960, 1980, or this year; the date does not matter so much. But if you are writing about a topic that is dynamic (changes often), such as a medical, scientific, or a current social topic, then recent sources are a necessity.

5. **Objectivity (bias).** Does the author treat the subject fairly? Though an author may be proposing a particular point of view, does s/he seem to acknowledge and address other sides of the issue? Is the author connected to any foundation or organization that is sponsoring or paying him/her, which might indicate bias?

If you are evaluating an open source, be sure to determine the purpose of the website: whether it was meant for information or meant for persuasion (to get you to buy something).
Student Example of a Source Evaluation:

Super Student
Professor
COLL300

Evaluating Sources: APA


**Credible Author:** The author of this study should be considered an expert because among other positions she has served as a senior political scientist with the RAND (Research and Development) Corporation, was a political officer to the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, and a senior resource associate in ISIP’s Center for Conflict analysis and Prevention. For this particular study, she was personally requested by former Air Force Chief of Staff General John Jumper after the Sept. 11th attacks.

**Reliable Publisher:** The publication of this study is the RAND Corporation, a top, nonprofit global policy think tank that providing analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. This nonpartisan organization was originally created for the United States Armed Forces, but has since expanded to work with other governments, private organizations, foundations, international organizations, and other companies. They publish peer-reviewed articles and studies. Their reputation is extremely well spoken of, with little criticism.

**Accuracy:** This was a well thought-out, in-demand product that had a team of key research
analysts working on it. There is no blaringly incorrect information, and I have to take most of it at surface value. RAND Corporation releases some of the most top quality unclassified studies on terrorism, global security, and foreign policy that I have found to date. This source supports other information that I have found regarding this subject, and every study that is released from RAND Corporation is closely peer reviewed. A comprehensive reference list is present.

**Currency:** This report is relatively up to date. While it was written in 2004 and I understand that this is a few years back, I used it because it includes historical background on the cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. The policy has not changed drastically between the years 2004-2011. In 2011 the policy changed with President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton taking a harder look at Pakistan, and the killing of key Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and this new information will be included in my final paper. The information found in this study will provide good background research on the policy and relations between Pakistan and the United States.

**Objectivity:** While I did not detect any biases while reading this study, I have to think critically and admit that this is an American produced report following the largest terror attack to date, requested by the former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, so I can see how there might be some bias with the fact that these are Americans writing this with a mission to defeat terrorism and to discuss counterterrorism cooperation amongst counties. My assessment is that there is a fair amount of pro-American bias found in this study, but that is to be expected because it is written to address one side of the issue.
BEGINNING YOUR NOTE-TAKING

You now have sources you can trust, ones on which to take notes. Researching requires that you read critically; to rise above scattered or gushing research, you need to question what you read. Questions to start with include:

- How does this author support his or her opinion?
- Why did the author choose that example or piece of evidence?
- How does the text relate to others in your search?
- One way to focus your reading and analysis of a source is to read with a specific question in mind. Why are you reading this text? What do you hope to discover through your reading?

It may have been a long time since you have taken notes. Sitting in a classroom and jotting down phrases from the instructor’s lecture may be all you recall of the process. With technology today, the process is simplified IF one is careful about keeping track of sources and source material.

Plagiarism is a common result of poor note-taking skills. Too often students do not plan their time well, so they get down to the final hours and panic. Instead of having their own notes to compile and synthesize, they spread out their articles in front of them or open multiple articles online and plunge in haphazardly. Bleary from stress and fatigue, jittery from caffeine, words that they have read start to blur with what they think are their own ideas. Unfortunately, this is fertile ground for plagiarism and source abuses to occur.

Students should adopt careful note-taking methods to prevent this from happening. No matter which technique you use, the most important key to keep in mind is to differentiate between the source’s material and your own ideas. Putting quotation marks
around word-for-word sentences and phrases is an excellent way to keep track of the author’s material. **Color-coding** all material taken word-for-word is another way to keep quotations separate from your own thoughts. You might use one color for quoted material, a different color for a paraphrased idea, and black text for your own thoughts. Remember that if a document contains page numbers, you need to keep track of those page numbers of quotations for APA and Chicago. For MLA, you need page numbers for all cited material, whether quotations or paraphrases.

**CREATE A SYSTEM: ELECTRONIC NOTE-TAKING**

Most (if not all) of your sources may be electronic: online journal articles and e-books, for instance. Guidelines and technology can help you keep track of sources and source material.

1) **Labeling source material.** One idea is to put the source’s reference information at the top of a Word document and then take notes from that source, placing them in the same document. Doing this with all your material, you will have a document for each source. _Downside:_ synthesizing the material may become more of a challenge.

2) **Create sub-topic sheets for your paper.** If you have a sense of the different subtopics that your paper will cover, dedicate a document to each one. At the top of each, list all your sources and code them by letter or color. Then when you put your notes in the document you can put the source letter or color next to it so that you know where the ideas came from. Similarly, you can create a rough outline in one document and put notes in their designated sections.
3) **The double-entry journal (DEJ).** Whether taking notes by hand or on the computer, you can use a two-column approach to note-taking. The left side should contain the author’s ideas, either quoted or paraphrased. The right side should contain your thoughts and questions on the subject matter. This is a great way to incorporate analytical thinking and synthesis as you read. Tip: Use the Tables tool in Word to set up your journal.

4) **Use electronic tools.** Microsoft Word’s References tab, RefWorks, and OneNote are among many tools meant to make a student’s life easier. Word’s References tab allows you to Manage Sources, adding in the essential information and formatting it accordingly. Note: if you are using older software, the reference format may not be current, so cross-check it against the style manual the class is using. Also be sure to spell and capitalize correctly, as errors you commit will end up in the citation as well.

**ACTIVE AND ANALYTICAL READING**

While electronic tools can help you be efficient with your time and your note-taking process, there are, unfortunately, no short-cuts for analytical thinking. Active reading strategies can help, however.

1. **Annotate.** Annotation marks are used to help you *engage* with the text, which is a buzz word for interacting and thinking critically about the material. **Underlining,** **highlighting,** using question marks, exclamation points, making comments that connect your personal experience with the content are among annotation marks.

2. **Ask analytical (“break it down”) questions:**
   - What seem to be the author’s underlying assumptions?
Research, Analysis, and Writing

- What ideas are included? What has not been included?
- What subtopics exist in this article? How are the elements of this article related?
- What cause/effect relationships are identified, if any?
- What seems to be inferred by the author?
- How does he/she present his material (organizational pattern)?
- What is the possible impact of this article’s subject? (Why does it matter?)
- How does this text relate to what else you have read?
- Do the conclusions of the author make sense in light of the evidence she presents?

3. Do not distort information or take it out of context.

4. Look for transitional cues that will identify the next point (topic sentences and transitions: such as, furthermore, in addition to...)

The following content from Charles Bazerman’s book called *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines* discusses the kinds of comments you can make as you engage with the writing.
ADDITIONAL ELECTRONIC TOOLS USEFUL FOR NOTE-TAKING

- **Wired Marker** will allow you to highlight web documents. It produces an automatic bookmark for highlighted material. It should be noted that Wired Marker is an add-on to the (free) Firefox browser, so you need to have that installed on your computer.

- **Dragon Naturally Speaking** is speech recognition software [<www.nuance.com>]. If you hate taking notes, consider trying this as an alternative. Note: This software is not free. There IS a mobile phone version that is free for **iPad** and ** iPhones**.

CRITICAL THINKING AND DRAFTING

Once you have analyzed the texts involved in your research and taken notes, you must turn to the task of writing your essay. The goal here is not simply to summarize your findings. Critical writing requires that you communicate your analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of those findings to your audience. It is not a linear process, and hopefully you have been thinking critically all along, from choosing sources to discerning which ideas have merit. In order to argue one solution is superior to another solution, you will need to analyze prospective solutions, synthesize that analysis for your readers, and make an evaluation as to which solution will best solve the problem you are researching.

Any soldier who has gone through boot camp knows about being broken down before being “remade” or built up again. The analysis and synthesis parts of research are similar. Unlike analyzing, which breaks ideas down into parts, synthesizing involves bringing them together.

These questions can help you synthesize and process your notes:

1. What do your sources have in common? At first glance, you might see only that the topic is loosely connected but look for connective themes among subtopics.
2. How can you merge what you have discovered and find your own voice? This is where you turn back to your notes, especially if you made a double-entry journal where you recorded your own thoughts on each idea.

3. Staying true to context and intent, which ideas are the best ideas to use?

4. What patterns can you identify, and what conclusions can you draw?

5. What disagreements among sources do you notice? Which view do you trust more and why?

Critical thinking/analysis involves looking at a topic or issue from a variety of perspectives. Asking questions and examining the problem and solution from a variety of angles will result in a deeper, more engaging and effective paper. This is why, as you come across ideas that differ from your point of view, you need to pursue them for analysis. Since you are advocating a particular solution to your problem, you need to show why alternative solutions are not the best choices. Being aware of other possibilities will give further credibility to your own position because you have acknowledged—not ignored—other solutions, and you will be able to support why your proposal is the best choice.

Bazerman's “Comparing and Synthesizing Sources” is a chapter that goes into more detail about evaluating what you read.

You analyze and synthesize even before you compose your first draft. Let’s look at one more list to keep handy as you write that draft. In an article called, “Teaching Conventions of Academic Discourse,” Teresa Thonney outlines six standard features of academic writing:
1. Writers respond to what others have said about their topic.
2. Writers state the value of their work and announce their plan for their papers.
3. Writers acknowledge that others might disagree with the position they have taken.
4. Writers adopt a voice of authority.
5. Writers use academic and discipline-specific vocabulary.
6. Writers emphasize evidence, often in tables, graphs, and images. (348)

Use these standards to help frame your purpose, and come back to the list to check your finished draft against them.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[Drawing Relationships](#)—a two-minute video about sketching to see how ideas relate.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Putting it all together can be the most challenging part of research. Making good choices along the way improves your chances for a well thought out, effective paper. Those choices include evaluating sources: primary versus secondary, and popular versus scholarly. Making good choices also means critiquing a source’s authority, accuracy, currency, and objectivity. Designing a note-taking method that works best for you and incorporating electronic tools if that is your preferred mode will make the writing process much easier. You will analyze and synthesize material, determining which ideas are most convincing, why you do not agree with alternative solutions, and what the best evidence is for the solution you are proposing. Most of all, allowing time in your schedule for each of these steps is essential for a productive drafting session.
REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED


CHAPTER 5: USING MATERIALS FROM SOURCES

TECHNIQUES FOR INCLUDING MATERIAL FROM SOURCES

There are three main techniques for incorporating materials from sources into your own argument: quotation, paraphrasing, and summary. You may remember learning a bit about these techniques in ENGL101, so they should already be familiar. However, since working effectively with these techniques takes continued practice, we will revisit them here and look at the principles behind their purpose and methods of using them in a bit more depth.

To begin, we will consider why we use outside sources in our own writing. Yes, they are required in academic research projects, but that's only the most superficial reason for using them. The real reason for using outside sources in our own writing is to establish our own part in the discussion about the topic we are addressing. In Chapter One, we discussed Kenneth Burke's metaphor for academic research as participation in an “unending conversation,” including the idea that we must first listen in (do preliminary research) before we can add our own voice to the discussion, weaving it into the conversation and responding to what others have said (Burke 110-111). The idea of response is the important point in this chapter, where we will discuss how to incorporate the voices of those other participants in the conversation into our own contribution. In order to do this when we write on a topic, we need to reference directly the others who have already written on the topic, showing that we are aware of what they have written before responding to those ideas, expanding on them, and perhaps even arguing against them if they seem for some reason to be incorrect.

Burke ends his metaphor by pointing out that we cannot necessarily finish the conversation by offering a definitive answer or solution, but perhaps have to just give our
contribution on a specific part of it before moving on and leaving the conversation, so to speak (110-111). What is important about including other sources in our writing, however, is making clear how our ideas are part of this larger conversation. We need to show whose views have informed our own, what other writers we are responding to or expanding on, and especially whose views we may be arguing against. All of this not only helps us as writers to be truly informed about our topic, but also to show our readers where we are in the on-going discussion of the topic. This sort of context is important; it can establish for readers a sort of lineage of ideas that lets them see what other writers have helped you to come to your conclusions.

This lineage is important particularly in the way that it can help your readers to understand the unstated underlying assumptions that inform your view, assumptions that we ourselves take for granted, and may not believe that we need to state outright in our writing. Think, for instance, of the economic debates that have been a staple of American political debate in recent years. We can assume that a politician who positively references John Maynard Keynes as a source will probably create economic policies that lean toward a more regulated economy. By contrast, if the politician speaks positively of Milton Friedman, we can guess that he will probably be against regulation, and advocate for a free-market economy. Even if we have not yet read any specific writing by the politician about what sort of economic policies he will push, we can guess, just from his reference to a particular economist, what his policies may entail. Would the politician need to explain to us in a policy document or speech that he believes free-market economics to be the most effective? Not necessarily; all he would have to do is reference a figure like Friedman and we will know.

This does, of course, rely on some audience knowledge of the figures being referenced, so it is limited in its application. The more in-depth and discipline-specific your
writing, the less likely it is that a random bystander will know the important figures in your field, though other scholars or professionals of your field would recognize their names readily. Therefore, it is still important here to keep in mind the audience you're writing for, and make sure that you make reasonable assumptions about what figures your audience will know. If you are trying to write about a complicated issue in your field for a more general audience, you may need to give a bit more clearly stated context for important writers, something that will be discussed later on in the chapter. For now, however, we will move on to exactly how we reference the other writers we have been reading; for this, we use the techniques of quotation, paraphrasing, and summary. Each of these techniques follows different guidelines and is used for different purposes, and you will probably need to use all three in your writing at some point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Included Detail?</th>
<th>Modification of Passage?</th>
<th>How marked?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>No modification</td>
<td>Quotation marks or long quotation format, citation as required by style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Complete modification of wording and sentence structure; meaning and details included should remain the same</td>
<td>Signal phrase to indicate where the paraphrase begins and other citation as required by style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Only highlights</td>
<td>Complete modification of wording and sentence structure; elimination of unnecessary elements</td>
<td>Signal phrase to indicate where the summary begins and other citation as required by style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUOTATION

Quotation is the direct use of not only ideas but also actual wording from a source in your own writing. It must always be clearly marked as a quotation so that readers can easily see that it is the original wording of the source. Usually this is done through the use of an opening signal phrase and quotation marks. For example: Diana Hacker tells us that “to show that you are using a source's exact phrases or sentences, enclose them in quotation mark” (108). Sometimes, however, you may find that you have a particularly long quotation that you want to include. These long quotations should begin on a new line, and the full quotation should be indented. The exact requirements will vary depending on the style in which you are writing. In her *Pocket Style Manual*, Diana Hacker explains that in MLA format:

> When you quote more than four typed lines of prose or more than three lines of poetry, set off the quotation by indenting it one inch (or ten spaces) from the left margin. . . . At the end of an indented quotation, the parenthetical citation goes outside of the final punctuation mark. . . . [In APA format,] when you quote forty or more words, set off the quotation by indenting it one-half inch (or five spaces) from the left margin. Use the normal right margin and do not single space. (111-112, 162)

Note that this long quotation used MLA format, with the one-inch indentation and number-only page citations. It also introduces some other techniques of quotation use, specifically the use of ellipses to indicate that some words from the passage have been cut. The bracketed phrase that is included is there to indicate the words contained in the bracket are those of the writer who is using the quotation, and are not actually words found in the original passage; you should insert bracketed words or phrases of this kind when you need
to rework the grammatical structure of the quotation in order to fit it into your own sentence or paragraph structure. Take care, however, when using ellipses and bracketed phrases, that you do not actually change the meaning of the quotation; this kind of misleading quotation use is dishonest, and may cause a loss of reader trust in you should readers discover what you have done.

Now that we have looked at how to mark quotations, we will discuss why a writer might choose to use them. Quotations should be used sparingly, and generally should not be the main way that you include material from sources. Reasons to use quotations include:

- **Phrasing that is so strong and effective that you feel it would lose something of the meaning or power of the passage if you were to try and paraphrase it.** Paraphrases, as will be discussed in the next section, need to reproduce a quotation's meaning exactly, so if you cannot paraphrase and preserve completely the meaning of the passage, quote the passage instead. In addition, sometimes a passage will make its point in a way that is just so effective or memorable that paraphrasing it would diminish the effect of the quotation. In these cases, quotation is again the better choice.

- **If you cannot find any way to re-work the passage into a true paraphrase, and attempting to do so might cause you to stray into partial plagiarism of wording or phrasing.** This is related to the previous instance, but has more to do with distinctive phrasing. Sometimes the language used is so specific that there is no appropriate synonym, or the sentence structure is so precise that changing the sentence structure would make the idea hard to understand. Rather than committing a sort of partial plagiarism of distinctive wording or sentence structure, use a quotation.
• The author you are quoting is an important figure in the field, and you need to “borrow” some of that author’s authority to help support your own authority. This goes back to the concept of a “lineage of ideas” as discussed in the beginning of a chapter. As noted there, whom you reference can tell your readers quite a bit about your view. Finding a quotation from a major figure in the field that supports your own idea can help to add some solidity to your idea in your readers’ minds.

• You are actually discussing the wording or phrasing of the passage, as in a literary essay. In these cases, how something is said is just as important as what is said, and so direct evidence like quotation is more necessary. It allows readers to better grasp the tone and “feel” of the piece of writing you are discussing, and gives you the opportunity to offer a close reading of that writing in support of your own claims.

No matter why you choose to bring quotations into your own writing, do take care to avoid overuse of quotations in all essays. Too many quotations can lead to your own voice being lost in the clamor, and cause your readers difficulty in following your argument. Because quotations require readers to mentally “shift gears” to move from your voice and thoughts into those of these other people, overuse can be disorienting and distracting. Your own voice and ideas should always be dominant in a research essay; the voices of other writers, important as they are, should be more like the spices in a recipe. Without those spices, the dish would lose much of its flavor, but it would still be edible. Too much spice, particularly too much of any one spice, could cause the main ingredients of the dish to be overwhelmed, and perhaps to become impossible to eat. Similarly, having too few quotations may make your writing seem a bit bland and disengaged, but too many could make the writing actually difficult to follow. So take care when deciding how many and which quotations to include. This potential for confusion is also one of the reasons why we must be so careful to
integrate quotations and other evidence thoroughly, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

**Paraphrase**

Paraphrasing is a technique in which the writer presents material from a source, retaining all or most of the details from the source's passage, and will probably be the main way that you incorporate information from sources into your essays. It allows you to keep the voice of the essay more consistent, and lets you incorporate information from sources smoothly and without changing the tone of your writing. It can also be beneficial to you as a writer because paraphrasing forces you to engage more completely with what is being said in a passage. In order to reproduce the meaning of the passage accurately while completely changing its phrasing, you must fully process the passage intellectually and reshape it through your own understanding of its meaning. This kind of engagement may help you to better understand some of the less obvious nuances and shadings of the passage that you might miss if you were incorporating it as a quotation.

A paraphrase will generally be about the same length as the original passage, but uses the writer's own wording and sentence arrangement. The source must still be acknowledged; usually this is done by using a combination of a signal phrase, which allows readers to see that the writer is moving into material from a source as well as making clear what the source is, and a citation, which allows the reader to connect the material with one of the sources listed in the bibliography/works cited list. The most important difference between a paraphrase and a quotation is that while a quotation retains the original wording and arrangement of ideas, the paraphrase does not. **It is very important that a paraphrase use different wording and that it arranges the ideas differently than the source**, while not actually changing the meaning or content of the passage.
Creating an accurate paraphrase that does not reproduce distinctive phrasing or sentence structure can be surprisingly difficult. Common issues with accurate paraphrasing include:

- **Not fully understanding what is being said:** Make sure that you fully understand all the language being used in the passage; look up unfamiliar words rather than guessing at their meaning so that you can ensure your comprehension of the passage's meaning is accurate.

- **Bias on the writer's part that makes full engagement with the original passage difficult:** Check your own assumptions about the topic, and try to put yourself in the other writer's shoes, so to speak—if the topic is controversial, what values seem to inform this writer's perspective? When paraphrasing you will need to take on that perspective and reproduce it accurately, and not add in wording or phrasing that shows your own bias against that viewpoint.

- **Lack of engagement with the full context of the original passage:** Try to avoid isolating the ideas of the passage from their context; make sure that the nuances contributed to it by the material that comes in the work before the passage and after the passage are not missed. An interesting example of this kind of problem is when a source contains not only its own arguments, but also outlines counterarguments that it then addresses. Writers making use of that source must not represent those counterarguments as being the point advocated by that source because taking them out of context in that way is a complete misrepresentation of the source.

- **Bringing in ideas that were referenced elsewhere in the work, but not actually mentioned in the original passage:** This is tempting to do when you need to add some kind of context to make the meaning of a passage clear, but you do need to be clear
about what is from the original passage, and what is context from elsewhere in that source. Thoughtful use of signal phrases is the best way to give this context while not misrepresenting the content of the passage.

To avoid these kinds of problems, take your time with passages that you want to paraphrase, and the works from which those passages come. Make sure that you fully understand what is being discussed in that work, and from what angle the author approaches the topic. Consider, in your notes, writing down some observations about what seem to be the author’s underlying assumptions, and annotating any passages you want to paraphrase with contextual information that might be important to remember when paraphrasing. When the time comes to actually write the paraphrase, however, put away the notes and cover up the original passage: try to write the paraphrase from memory, or explain the meaning out loud as though you were re-phrasing it for someone who had trouble understanding the original. Poor paraphrases with plagiarized phrases are often the result of being too immediately aware of the language of the original passage, and the simplest way to prevent this issue is to engage the original passage intellectually by forcing yourself memorize the meaning. Once you've done that, try to put it into words without looking at the original, and it will be more likely to come out in your own voice, not that of the source. Once you're done, check it against the original to make sure that you have not reproduced any distinctive phrasing or forgotten to include an important detail.

Examples of Paraphrasing

(Original passage, from Benjamin Franklin’s “Speech to the [Constitutional] Convention”)

Mr. President, I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present; but, Sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it; for, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change my opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.
Summary

Summary is a technique in which the writer gives a brief overview of the content of a source. Summarizing material allows you to briefly reference that source and the ideas it contains without having to insert a huge amount of material into your text. It should be used when you need to provide some context for readers, but not in great detail. If you are writing on an
event or text or such that is not well known even in your field, you may find yourself using summary a great deal. Because you cannot assume that the readers will already be familiar with all the important aspects of the topic, you need to give them some overview of the key parts so that they gain a basic understanding of the whole. You do not, however, need to give them all the interesting but fiddly details; if readers feel that they need more information, they can look up the sources in your bibliography and read up on the topic for themselves. You only need to give enough detail to make clear the context of the specific parts of the topic that are most important to your analysis.

**USING SUMMARY IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course and Topic</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A history essay on a particular Civil War battle</td>
<td>You might briefly summarize the major events of that battle, but not give the details of every unit's participation. If those details are not necessary for readers to understand what you are writing about, then there is no need to include them, and you can instead focus on the specific parts of the battle most important to the point you are making in the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A literature essay on a minor medieval romance</td>
<td>You might give a brief synopsis of the plot and overview of the major characters in the story. Details of plot twists would probably be unnecessary unless you discuss them in your analysis, and if this were the case, you would give more information in the spot where you analyzed that part of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A legal studies essay on a particular legal issue</td>
<td>You might give a summary of any legal decisions, particularly those involving higher court decisions, that pertain to that topic. If a court decision is fairly well known in our culture, such as Brown vs. the Board of Education, you probably do not need to give a summary, however.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When writing a summary of research to be included in an essay, remember the two most important characteristics of summaries:

- They are usually much shorter in length than the original passage or work;
- They do not give every single detail included in the passage.

In essence, a summary goes through the highlights and most important parts of the passage or work being discussed. If summarizing a critical essay, for instance, you might mention the main point of the essay, and briefly go through the supporting points that the author uses to explain that main point. Generally, details will not come up in summaries; broad overviews are all that will be included. After giving a broad summary of a work to establish context and background, you might then go on to use details from that work (in the form of paraphrases or quotations) in your argument.

**Your Turn**

Choose one source that you have found so far in your research and print out the full text. Go through the source with different colored highlighters or pens and mark all of the quotations, paraphrases and summaries in the source. Choose a few of each and try to decide why the writer of that source decided to use the technique that he or she did. Do you agree with the choices the writer made? Do you see any spots where you would have used a different technique to incorporate material from another source?

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

Another area in which summary can be useful is during your initial research. In order to better keep track of the sources you find, consider reading through them and then writing up a brief summary that focuses on what you found the most important about the work. To
some degree, this may already be done in an abstract, but writing your own summary allows you to highlight the points that could be useful to your own project. Sometimes information that a source discusses only briefly can become a central point of another writer's essay, so write up a summary that will help you keep track of even minor details that relate to your topic. This can also be useful if you are asked to write an annotated bibliography, which is a working bibliography in which the entries have notes appended to them to help show how not only what they are, but also how they might contribute to your research project. Usually, the layout begins with the bibliographic entry itself, formatted in the appropriate style for your field, and is then followed by an annotation that begins with a summary of the source, and then continues to talk about particular reasons that you might choose to use that source (usually about one to three sentences long). For instance, is the source a foundational one for the topic you're writing on? Does it present some particular information or view on the topic that is important to your own argument? Be as specific as possible about the how part of the annotation, as that is important not only to give your readers an idea of the source's utility, but can also help you to keep track of what information was found in which source. See the included sample bibliography for examples of this, and note that the order of information varies from what is detailed here.

As simple as this sounds, there are some things that you should avoid doing in an annotated bibliography. One common mistake is including too much detail in the annotations; remember that this should only be a summary, and a very brief one at that. Where in a regular abstract-style summary of the work you might do as is suggested earlier and write down not only a paraphrase of the source's thesis/main claim but also sentences that give overviews of the major points used to support this claim, the annotation in the annotated bibliography should be much more brief—probably no more than one or two
Research, Analysis, and Writing

sentences. Another issue that has come up is students who choose to quote the source's published abstract instead of writing their own summary; again, this usually gives too much information, and is also inappropriate when you're being asked to summarize the work in your own words. The ideal annotation will contain only a short summary in your own words and a brief, specific discussion of that source's usefulness for your project; these two things together inform the reader about the source, and give a bit more information on how your conception of your project is progressing.

Sample Annotated Bibliography

This is a very concise and in-depth look at the constraints that affect the United States' ability to use force against terrorist threats. Professor Barnett redefines asymmetric warfare and explains how the U.S. enemies use asymmetric warfare not in the old classic role of strength against weakness but the willingness to exploit the U.S. lack of will to wield its full military power against a militarily inferior enemy. I will use the book as a main reference into how asymmetric warfare will affect future U.S. military operations.

This book is literally the definitive textbook on insurgent and terrorist movements. O'Neill originally wrote his book in 1990 but has since updated it to include the most current insurgent and terrorist activities happening throughout the world. He details new weapons and tactics used or threatened to be used. This book will provide me with detailed insight into the motivations and intentions of the insurgent and terrorist movements that threaten the U.S. military and its interests around the world.

Thornton’s book looks at asymmetric warfare in all aspects of combat operations from land to cyberspace. This book provides a comprehensive detailed analysis of the progression of terrorist activities and how they have incorporated asymmetric principles into their operations. This book will provide me with detailed reference as to the use of asymmetric warfare in various combat environments from land based operations to cyber warfare.

Barnett’s informational paper explains the necessity to counter transnational asymmetric threats. This paper explains what the effects will be if the U.S. fails to act against transnational threats. Barnett goes on to detail necessary tasks that will have to be
undertaken to prevent the world from succumbing to the effects of those wanting to destroy society. I will use the arguments and conclusions in this paper to support my ideas and conclusions as to what the U.S. will need to do in order to combat asymmetric terrorist threats.


Blank's monograph is one of the first works to look at the actual definition of asymmetric warfare and what it constitutes. Properly defining what construes an asymmetric threat will ensure that actual threats are defined and countered. I will use this monograph as a reference to properly identify the asymmetric threats poised against the U.S.

**Integrating Materials from Sources**

Integrating materials from sources into your own text can be tricky; if we go back to the conversation metaphor from the beginning of this chapter, it helps us to think about how this will best work. When you're discussing a topic in person with one or more people, you will find yourself referencing outside sources: “When I was watching the news, I heard them say that . . . I read in the newspaper that . . . John told me that . . .” These kinds of phrases show instances of using a source in conversation, and ways that we automatically shape our sentences to work references to the sources into the flow of conversation. Think about this next time you try to work a source into a piece of writing: if you were speaking this aloud in conversation, how would you introduce the material to your listeners? What information would you give them in order to help them understand who the author was, and why his or her view is worth referencing? After giving the information, how would you then link it back to the point you were trying to make? Just as you would do this in a conversation if you found it necessary to reference a newspaper article or television show you saw, you also need to do this in your essays.

In addition to inserting the actual material from the source into your writing, you need to do a few other things: transition into and introduce the source, use a signal phrase to actually move into the material from the source, provide a citation that can be easily
connected to the full citation material in your bibliography or works cited list, and explain how this material fits into your argument. Many writing textbooks refer to this as a *quotation sandwich*, but it can and should also be used to integrate paraphrases and summaries. All material from sources that you use in your own work must be integrated in this way, or you risk readers becoming confused about its importance and purpose.

**THE SOURCE MATERIAL “SANDWICH”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition and Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signal phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation, paraphrase, or summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of the material's relevance to your argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transitioning into and introducing the material helps readers to make the move from your ideas into those of the source, allowing them to follow the logic of how you moved from your last stated idea into the idea being expressed in the source. The transition and introduction should also give readers an idea of why this source is important. Is the author of the source an important voice on this topic? What are his or her qualifications for commenting on it? Is this a well-known source who carries weight in this field? Did the source perhaps appear in a respected peer-reviewed journal? In many ways, this introduction will establish the *ethos*, or authority, of a source. It lets readers know why they should join you in paying attention to what the source has to say on the topic, and lets them
in on the chain of logic guiding your argument. Whether a phrase or a full sentence, the transition and introduction help to establish context that allows readers to understand the source material in relation to the parts of the argument they have already read, and as part of a larger discussion of the topic.

Once the source has been introduced, the material itself can be brought in. Usually the material is prefaced by a short signal phrase that integrates the first part into a sentence; if you look back at the box with the paraphrase examples, you'll see that the paraphrases start with, “Benjamin Franklin tells the president of the Constitutional Convention . . .” Note that this signal phrase is distinct from the transitional/introductory material discussed in the previous paragraph, though it can be mixed in with transitional and introductory phrases: “Franklin was a respected delegate to the Constitutional Convention, but in his address he tells the president of the convention . . .” These initial parts of the “sandwich” can be mixed together without much trouble, but each does need to be clearly present.

**Signal Phrase Verbs**

Signal phrases are relatively simple in construction, just a noun or pronoun and a verb that precedes the quotation, paraphrase, or summary. The noun or pronoun is usually easy to choose—it will generally be the author's name or a pronoun referring to the author, or, if there is no author, an appropriate substitute such as the title of the work or the name of the entity that created the work. The verbs used in signal phrases, however, are a bit more open to choice, and can have a notable effect on how readers perceive the quotation, paraphrase, or summary that follows.

Using neutral verbs (tells, explains, states, writes, describes, etc.) keeps the approach to
the source material neutral and value-free; they do not give the readers any particular clues to your own attitude toward the source.

Verbs such as confirms, contends, insists, admits, argues, and similar verbs will give readers information about how you see the source material operating within the context of the discussion about the topic; these may lead them to expect that you will talk more about this source as it relates to other sources.

Verbs with negative connotations (such as whines, blusters, scoffs) or overly descriptive meanings should be avoided.

For more complete lists of appropriate signal phrase verb choices, look around online; there are a number of different lists accessible through web sources.

All quotations, paraphrases, and summaries must have a citation near them in the text. No matter what technique you are using, citation is required for all outside information brought into your own writing. In some cases, the signal phrase that you have used to bring readers into the material will be enough, but in most cases, you may need to use a parenthetical citation, footnote, or endnote; check the citation style you are using for specifics of how to format your in-text citations. The basic rule, however, no matter the style, is that there should be enough information in the in-text citation to allow readers to connect it with one of the sources listed in your bibliography, works cited list, or end notes. If a reader cannot make this connection with ease, then the citation needs to be revised somehow.
After the source material has been introduced, placed, and cited, the last thing left to do is the most important in terms of fitting it into your essay: explaining how this material actually relates to your argument. Despite the common conception that “the evidence speaks for itself,” material from sources placed into an essay really does not. We all tend to understand evidence that we bring in, whether from primary or secondary sources, in slightly different ways, and so in order to make sure that your readers understand the evidence you use in the same way that you do, you must explain how you see it as relating to the argument you are making. Engage with the material, pointing out the specific parts that seemed important to you, and explaining how it supports or otherwise contributes to the point you are making in that particular paragraph. Without this explanation, readers might guess at the connection, but they also might not, and the end result would be a choppy essay that confuses readers as it jumps from your ideas to ideas from sources and back again. The explanation following the source material is not only informative, but also a transition from that source material back into your own argument. An example:

Foundational literary critic Northrop Frye includes in his definition of stream of consciousness techniques “unorthodox punctuation...unusual capitalization...frequent italics...or sometimes a lack of punctuation or of distinguishing typefaces altogether” (444). One example of this type of narration exists in "The Bear." Part 4 of "The Bear" is of Ike recounting the history of the McCaslin land and home. This section lacks punctuation and narrative clarity making it more difficult to read than some of the other Faulkner pieces. The first part of the first sentence contains the introduction and signal phrase, and the (444) at the end of the quotation is an MLA in-text citation. The last section of the passage is the
explanation. Note how it brings together the quotation from Frye with a discussion of “The Bear” (a short story by William Faulkner), thus relating the new evidence to the overall point being argued in the essay. Without this explanation, readers would be left at sea to wonder why you were bringing Northrop Frye quotations into a discussion of a Faulkner short story.

Your Turn

Print out the full text of one of your sources and study the methods it used for integrating sources that it used. Can you find an introduction, signal phrase, citation, and explanation for each piece of evidence or other source material used? If this is lacking for any piece, how does it affect your experience as a reader?

Closing Thoughts

Integration of sources does take a bit of time and thought, but it is integral to the creation of a strong and unified essay. Doing so requires consideration of how to balance the material you bring in from sources with the material that you yourself are contributing to the essay; always try to ensure that your voice and ideas are the dominant force in the essay, and that your sources are not overpowering you. The first step in doing this is usually to have a strong sense of the viewpoint you are arguing; if you have this strong sense of your own argument, it becomes much easier to pull all of the source material into line behind it using the tips and techniques offered here. This kind of integration of sources allows you to strengthen that sense of argument even further and will bolster the flow of your argument by allowing you to transition smoothly between your own argument and material from your sources. In the end, all this will give your readers, whether or not they agree with you, a
better sense of how your argument fits into the “conversation” about the topic, connecting not only to those who discussed it before you, but also those who come into the conversation after.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

“Citing Information.” University of North Caroline Libraries.  
[http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/](http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/)

“Signal Phrases.” Sinclair Community College.  

**REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED**


CHAPTER 6: LET THE WRITING BEGIN

In this section, you will learn how to arrange your notes into a well-organized sentence outline and discover strategies for developing introductory and body paragraphs strengthened by smooth, effective transitions.

OUTLINING

In the overview to research writing presented in the first lesson, we mentioned outlining as an important writing tool. It is now time to delve into the topic more deeply. At this point in the research process, you should have amassed a substantial amount of notes. You need to formulate a plan for organizing those notes; you need to create a formal outline. While many students omit this step and move directly into drafting, taking the time to create a quality outline now will make the drafting process easier and improve the final product. In this class, you will be using a sentence outline—each topic and each subtopic will be written in complete sentences as shown in the student sample below. Outlining is more than simply imposing a structure on your notes; outlining involves critical thinking and analysis. As you outline, look for synthesis—the connection and relationship between your ideas. As you analyze your notes to prepare your outline, you will need to decide which ideas are truly important and which are only supportive. Along the way, you may also decide that some of your ideas are irrelevant and should be discarded and some of your ideas need additional support. Here is a quick guide to creating an outline. Begin by examining your thesis statement; highlight the problem and the solution.
Using your thesis as the guide, your first step is to break the thesis into its main parts. In a problem-solution report, for example, you will need to identify the problem first so begin your outline with a discussion of the problem. In the student sample above, the problem is elected federal officials actively trading stocks while holding office; the solution is a law to stop it. Now go through your research notes, dividing them into three categories: problem, alternate solution[s], proposed solution[s]. Working from these notes, begin by developing the problem section of your outline. Here is how one student developed the problem in his thesis statement:

**PROBLEM SECTION OF STUDENT OUTLINE**

I: Politicians are legally allowed to trade stocks while in office, essentially creating a conflict of interest between their personal finances and laws that can affect stock prices.

a. Allowing politicians to continue to trade stocks while in office allows them to use their elected position for monetary gain.

b. Politicians holding stock in a company that may be affected by proposed legislation has the potential to cause that individual to vote differently than if he/she held no such stock.
Notice that the student heads this section with a general statement identifying the problem and then uses sub-topics to develop specific support for his initial statement. When he moves from outlining to composing his first draft, the student will be able to develop this section further with specific examples. Keep in mind that developing and supporting your problem may take more than one section of your outline. The amount of time you devote to explaining and supporting your problem will depend on the complexity of the problem and on how likely your audience is to accept that the problem exists and is significant.

Once you have adequately developed the problem, your next task is to propose your solution. In some cases, it may also be necessary to present (and reject) alternate solutions. If alternative solutions to your problem exist, including them in your presentation is essential to establishing your credibility. In the sample below, notice how the student introduces, and then dismisses, an alternate solution before presenting his proposal. In the main heading, the student offers an alternate solution and then uses his sub-topics to refute the efficacy of that alternative.

**ALTERNATE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM**

III: Regulating insider trading would hold politicians accountable for making trades on stock between the time of acquiring political intelligence and actually voting on the legislation.

a. This does not completely eliminate the practice of trading stocks while in office, but aims to propose disciplinary action for those politicians caught using political intelligence for monetary gain.

b. Pursuing this as a solution would merely be a step in the right direction rather than ending the corrupt practice altogether.
Once you have presented and dismissed alternative solutions, you can propose your solution as demonstrated in the final section of the student outline below.

**PROPOSED SOLUTION TO PROBLEM**

IV: Requiring politicians to place their stock holdings into a blind trust for the entirety of their time as an elected official is the best solution to this problem.

a. This solution would allow politicians to vote without conscious of their current holdings, essentially eliminating the conflict of interest issue.

b. Having a third party handle the stock holdings of politicians removes the temptation for them to make trades based on political intelligence.

c. Protecting the sanctity of a politician’s vote in combination with removing the temptation to shirk one’s duty to represent his/her constituents to obtain personal gain will restore voter confidence in our elected officials.

A problem solution report makes organizing your outline a bit easier. As seen above, you will present the problem along with specific evidence establishing its significance and its causes. Next, turn your attention to solving the problem. In this section of your outline, it may be necessary to first provide and, through analysis of the evidence, dismiss alternative solutions before providing and supporting your own solution. You will need to fully explain your solution and provide evidence that it is the best way to solve the problem. In the drafting and revising stages, you will use your notes to add flesh to the bare bones of your outline. Here is an additional tip: providing informal source notes within the draft of your
Research, Analysis, and Writing

Your outline provides you with a guide to organizing and developing your final paper. It is a great first step, a tool to use as you develop your introduction and body paragraphs. Often students labor over introductions, thinking they are the first things to be written—not so. We cover them first only for organizational convenience. While the introduction may not be the first thing you write, the introduction is the first thing your reader will read, and as such, introduces not only your topic but also you as an author. A well-crafted introduction engages the reader and invites him or her to keep reading. A poorly crafted introduction will cause the reader to put your essay down and stop reading. If the reader is your professor, a poor introduction may send your paper to the bottom of the pile, the last to be graded. That is not where you want to be.

Will all that pressure on your introduction, you may find it beneficial to write your introduction last when the body of the paper is set. Whenever you write your introduction, keep in mind that an introduction has a specific job—actually three specific jobs:

- Identify the subject and set its limitations
- Interest readers
- Set the tone of the essay—let your reader know your attitude on the topic
Accomplishing all that in one or two paragraphs can seem like quite a bit, so let’s look at each of those things separately.

**IDENTIFY THE SUBJECT AND SET ITS LIMITATIONS**

Identifying the subject and setting its limitations is not as simple as saying, “In this essay, I will...” Your reader is yawning already! If you have done a good job with your thesis statement, you can use that to identify and limit your subject. For example, consider the following thesis statement: *Many students have difficulty completing research papers in their upper level courses; taking COLL300 early in their program can alleviate that problem by introducing students to citation formats, research techniques, and critical thinking skills.*

Can you identify the topic and limitations here? The thesis introduces the topic/problem (Many students have difficulty completing research papers in their upper level courses) and the solution (taking COLL300). Additionally, the thesis sets the parameters of the discussion. While there are myriad benefits to taking COLL300, this essay will focus on only three (introducing students to citation formats, research techniques, and critical thinking skills). The reader recognizes that the essay will focus on COLL300, but the discussion will be limited only to citation techniques, writing skills, and critical analysis.

**INTEREST READERS**

While COLL300 is a fascinating topic for an essay, there may be a few readers who need to be cajoled into reading. I need to build upon my thesis statement, but how? Here are some options:
Set the Tone

The tone of your essay reveals your attitude toward your subject or audience; your word choices and sentence structure can reveal your attitude in the same way your tone of voice in speech can reveal your attitude. Imagine introductions from two different instructors for COLL300:

- I have been teaching COLL300 for ten years; it's a good course. You'll probably learn a lot.

- Pose a question
  How can a student ensure success in upper level courses?

- Present a startling fact or statistic
  Ninety-eight percent of the students who complete COLL300 successfully complete their major courses with A’s or B’s.

- Use a quotation
  I could begin by quoting a student who has taken COLL300 and credits the course with successful research papers in his or her major courses.

- Relate an interesting anecdote
  I could begin with the story of a student struggling with a research paper and then introduce COLL300 as the solution to the student’s problems.
Welcome to COLL300; I have been teaching this course for ten years and I am excited to begin a new term. By the end of this course, you will have a better understanding of the research process and will have honed your critical thinking skills.

Which instructor would you want to spend eight weeks with? Why? What is the tone of each of the introductions above? What word choices and sentence choices did the author make to create tone?

The lesson here is to be sure that the tone of your introduction invites the reader into the essay. Consider your word choice carefully and sentence structure carefully. The contractions, simple sentences, and lackluster details in the first example identify the writer/professor as someone who is disengaged from the topic/course. As writers, the interest we display in our topics will translate to reader interest and keep them reading. Tone can be tricky; for a quick, clear definition of tone, visit this link: Writing Commons: Consider Your Voice, Tone, and Persona.
STRUCTURE OF THE INTRODUCTION

The most common structure for an introduction is the inverted pyramid or triangle as illustrated below:

Figure 6.1: A diagram shows an inverted triangle. The widest part of the triangle reads, "Quote, paraphrase, anecdote, or statistic to draw the reader into the essay." The middle of the triangle reads, "Narrow to specific topic." The narrowest part of the triangle reads, "Thesis Statement."

While this is the most common structure for an introduction, it is not the only one. How then do you decide what to do in the introduction? The guiding principles for all the decisions you make in a piece of writing are your audience and your purpose. What structure is the best for communicating your point to the reader? Writing with your audience and
purpose in mind will help you decide the length and structure of your introduction. How many paragraphs do I need? Where will my thesis be most effective?

Whether you choose to write your introduction first or last, be sure to allow enough time for designing an introduction that establishes your credibility through tone and engages the reader. Taking the time to create a well-crafted and inviting introduction is important. Your introduction is an invitation to your reader to continue reading—keep in mind that no one, except your professors, is required to read what you write. When you compose your introduction, be sure your invitation to read is one your reader will accept. Getting your reader to accept your invitation is only the first step in the process. Introductions are important; use the following links to expand your knowledge: [Introductions](#) and [UNC Writing Center: Introductions](#).

**BODY PARAGRAPHS**

While your introduction invites the reader into your piece, you need to keep the reader interested with well-developed body paragraphs. Here are some features of effective body paragraphs:

- Each paragraph should use specifics—show don’t tell
- Each paragraph should support your thesis statement
- Each paragraph should be connected smoothly to the one before and the one after with transitional words or phrases.
EACH PARAGRAPH SHOULD HAVE A WELL-FOCUSED TOPIC SENTENCE

Paragraphs are the building blocks of your essay. Just as your thesis statement sets the plan and introduces the topic for the entire essay, each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that introduces and limits the topic for the paragraph. For a detailed discussion on creating well-focused paragraphs, click on the following link: Paragraphs. The topic sentences of your paragraphs are actually sub-topics for your thesis statement. It may sound daunting, but luckily, you have a sentence outline to draw from.

Let us look at a main heading from the student outline introduced earlier in the chapter:

IV: Requiring politicians to place their stock holdings into a blind trust for the entirety of their time as an elected official is the best solution to this problem.

As you are drafting your paper, use the main and sub-headings of your outline as topic sentences for individual paragraphs. You may need to change these sentences in the editing and revision process, but this technique will get you started.

Continue to develop your draft by using your outline—one paragraph for each heading is a good place to start. Be sure that your paragraphs are unified and that they are focused on only one topic. In Elements of Style, William Strunk offers great advice on developing well-focused paragraphs. To take advantage of his advice, click on following link: Elements of Style: Paragraphs.
EACH PARAGRAPH SHOULD USE SPECIFICS—SHOW DON’T TELL

If your instructors have ever written “add more details,” “be more specific,” or “show don’t tell” on your papers, then you probably need to add more specific information at the sentence and paragraph level. Look at these sentences:

Telling: The old man entered the bus.

Showing: The old man in the tattered jeans and ripped flannel shirt entered the over-crowded, rickety bus.

Adding specific details to your writing creates a clearer image in your reader’s mind and enhances communication. If my reader reads the first sentence and immediately conjures an image of his or her sweet, well-dressed, affluent grandfather, then I have failed to communicate clearly to my reader. Adding specific details means that my reader and I are truly on the same page; it means that communication has been successful.

How did I move

From

The old man entered the bus.

To

The old man in the tattered jeans and ripped flannel shirt entered the over-crowded, rickety bus.

?
I asked questions. By asking (and answering) who, what, when, where, why, and how, I can generate specific details to add to my writing. Asking and answering these basic questions allows me to develop the vague and simple: “The old man entered the bus” into a detailed paragraph.

The old man in the tattered jeans and a ripped flannel shirt entered the over-crowded, rickety bus. The tired, but friendly, driver smiled as the man fumbled to find the exact change. As the old man limped to the back of the bus, two young executives stood up and offered him a seat.

A persuasive essay can benefit from more descriptive details as you relay your argument to your readers, helping them better visualize both the problem and the solution.

**EACH PARAGRAPH SHOULD SUPPORT YOUR THESIS STATEMENT**

When you are writing your body paragraphs, keep your thesis in mind to ensure that you are staying on topic. Writing from your outline will help you maintain your focus. As you are developing your first draft, keep your outline handy and develop the main points of your outline with facts, examples, quotations, and paraphrases from your research notes. Another technique is to write your thesis statement on a post-it note and attach the note to your computer screen as you write. Keeping your thesis statement nearby will help you maintain your focus.
Connecting paragraphs effectively means that you need to create transitions—bridges that will lead the reader from one idea to the next. Transitions are used both within paragraphs to move the reader through the paragraph smoothly and between paragraphs to connect the essay’s main points. Transitions are essential to good writing because they help the reader see the relationship between your ideas and help to organize your writing more effectively. Remember, if you do not connect your ideas for your readers, then they will connect those ideas on their own. Since the reader may not view things exactly as you do, he or she may connect your ideas differently and miss your point. For a demonstration of the difference transitions can make in writing, click on the following YouTube link: Transitions.

You can insert transitions into your writing in several ways. One of the simplest ways is to connect the last sentence of the first paragraph with the first or second sentence of the next paragraph.

When English teachers get together in the lofty towers of academia, they often debate which authors should be studied in literature classes. They call this group of select authors the cannon; these are the authors everyone should read to be considered well-rounded in literature. These authors are chosen for their ability to transcend time, race, and gender through the beauty of their words and the power of their message. We term these venerable works “the classics.” For many years, this elite group of authors was comprised primarily of a group of authors affectionately termed in some circles as “the dead white guys.”
In recent years, the canon has been renegotiated. Many of “the dead white guys” have been dropped in favor of ethnic and female authors.

Repeating the phrase “the dead white guys” helps to connect the two paragraphs and create a more unified essay. For another example of transitions linking paragraphs, click the following link: Logically Connecting Paragraphs.

Often, you can create a transition with a single word or phrase; use the charts below as a reference to adding transitions in your own writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Transitional Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLOSING THOUGHTS

With this chapter, you have begun the process of writing your research essay. Careful attention to your outline will help you organize your notes effectively and efficiently, a definite advantage as you begin the drafting process. By paying careful attention to the structure and focus of your individual paragraphs, you can build support into your essay. The University of North Carolina offers great advice on Paragraphs and Transitions so be sure to use these links to further your understanding. Using transitions to connect paragraphs strengthens your essay. For an overview of the relationship between outlining and drafting, click on the following link: The Research Essay. Ultimately, your essay’s organization lends credibility to your message and influences the reader.

REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED


CHAPTER 7: DRAFTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND ABSTRACTS

INTRODUCTION

In this section, you will continue to review tips for composing a draft, including the conclusion, and learn how to create an effective, informative abstract for your paper.

In the last chapter, you organized your notes into a viable outline and learned the qualities of effective introductions and body paragraphs. This week you move closer to your final product by completing your draft, including the conclusion, and writing an abstract. Your outline helped you see the points you will include in your paper, the order of those points, and the amount of emphasis or space you will allot to each point. At this point, you may feel overwhelmed trying to remember how to structure a paragraph and determining what details to include or how to integrate sources into your writing. Take a breath and go to Looking for Trouble: Finding Your Way into a Writing Assignment and Play the Believing Game to calm your anxiety and get a fresh perspective on your topic. Now take another breath and prepare to write your draft. Start by examining your outline to be sure that it fits your rhetorical situation (audience and purpose).

Examine your Outline and Ask:
- Does your organization fit your purpose?
- Have you included enough evidence to support your points?
- Have you used sources evenly, not relying on only one or two sources?
DRAFTING

At this stage in the process, writing your draft is a bit different from the freewriting, brainstorming, or webbing that you may have done to generate ideas for your topic. Use your outline for guidance as you draft your essay. Once you have analyzed your rhetorical situation and made any necessary adjustments to your outline, you can begin the drafting process. Each main point in your outline now becomes a topic sentence for a paragraph and supporting sentences can be created from your sub points. You can expand and support these points by quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing information from your notes, being careful to create an in-text citation for each quote, paraphrase, and summary. If you have included source information in your outline, you will know exactly where to find your supporting evidence. Including correct in-text citations at this point will prevent much frustration when you move to your final draft and help you avoid unintentional plagiarism. Following this plan, each paragraph in your paper should focus on a single idea, carefully developed by supporting sentences and adequate evidence. Effective, engaging writing is in the details; as the author, your task is to keep your readers' attention by providing them with those details.

Before completing your draft, you will need to consider your concluding paragraph(s). As conclusions are the last thing that your reader will read, it is also the last chance you have to make your point. If you need additional incentive to write an effective conclusion, keep in mind that your conclusion is also the last thing your professor will read before grading your paper. The lesson here? Write a strong conclusion!
CONCLUSIONS

A strong and well-focused thesis will make the conclusion easier to write as it will provide direction and focus to your essay. If that is the case, then your reader will be well prepared when he or she reaches your conclusion. You may want to begin thinking about your conclusion by going back and re-reading your introduction. If you still are not inspired, you can begin to draft your conclusion by asking questions. First, read your essay and ask “so what,” and then consider the questions below.

Questions to Consider to Craft Your Conclusion

- What point do I want my readers to take away from my essay?
- Do I want my readers to take any action after reading my essay?

Now that you have asked, and theoretically answered, some questions about your purpose, you should have a clearer idea of what to include in your conclusion. Still stuck? Try one of the following:

SUMMARIZE

If your paper is very long, summarizing your key points can help your reader synthesize and remember the information you have provided. You can restate your thesis, taking into consideration your most effective supporting points.

MAKE A FINAL APPEAL TO THE READER

Even though you have undoubtedly written a brilliant essay, your reader still may not be convinced. Use your conclusion to list the benefits of your argument or show the implications of accepting your point of view.
SHOW THE TOPIC’S SIGNIFICANCE

Everyone’s time is valuable. Reinforcing the importance of your topic will make the reading worthwhile for your audience and help them feel that the time spent reading your piece was time well spent.

ECHO THE INTRODUCTION

If you began your introduction with a rhetorical device such as a quote, statistic, or anecdote, you can return (echo, not repeat) to that rhetorical device as you close. For example, if you posed a question in your introduction, you may be able to answer it in your conclusion. Linking your conclusion to your introduction brings your discussion full circle and provides a sense of unity to your essay.

Additionally, you can employ a rhetorical device to conclude your paper, with one caveat: Do not use the same rhetorical device that you used in the introduction. Here is a list of rhetorical devices to consider as you conclude your paper. Sometimes, the cliché, saving the best for last, works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Devices for Your Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Provide a startling statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Include a relevant quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Relate an anecdote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Pose a question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While you have many options as you draft your conclusion, there are some strategies you should avoid. The *Little Brown Handbook* offers these tips:

**Conclusions to Avoid**

- Do not simply restate your introduction
- Do not introduce a new topic
- Do not overreach in your conclusion, by concluding more than is reasonable from the evidence you have provided
- Do not cast doubt or apologize for your essay

(Fowler et al. 111)

Because conclusions are an important part of your paper, you will want to do more reading on the topic. Use the following links to expand your knowledge and perfect your conclusion: [Writing Effective Conclusions](#) and [UNC Handout-Conclusions](#).

**WRITING YOUR ABSTRACT**

Now that you have completed your first draft, you can turn your attention to composing your abstract. To write an effective abstract, consider the document's purpose; researchers use abstracts to determine whether the full document will meet their research needs. As noted in *The College Writer*, an “abstract summarizes the paper's central issue, its main conclusion, the key reasoning and evidence presented, and the study's significance” (547). The key components of an abstract, therefore, are summary, significance, support, and closure. An abstract is a tool for researchers, and it is the gateway to your paper. When conducting professional research, whether someone reads your work can depend on the quality of your abstract.
HOW DO I START?

Before you can begin writing your abstract, you need to decide which type of abstract you are writing: informative or descriptive. (In this course, you are writing an informative abstract.) A descriptive abstract, used infrequently, simply outlines the topic without providing any content details. The informative abstract is used more often than the descriptive abstract and includes background, main points, methodology or research viewed, research findings, and conclusions. As you can see, the informative abstract is more detailed than the descriptive abstract and, therefore, more valuable to the reader. In addition to helping readers determine whether they should read the full paper, informative abstracts can enhance readers’ understanding. By synthesizing the information in the paper, the informative abstract prepares readers for what they will encounter within the paper. Use the chart below to begin drafting your abstract.

Steps to Draft an Abstract:
- Read and then write a brief summary of the main points of your paper.
- List the main types of evidence used to support your thesis statement.
- State the conclusion, which should flow logically from your evidence.
- Explain why your topic is important.

Following the above steps will help you generate the content needed in the rough draft of your abstract. Now, read your draft to determine the best order for your abstract. Using the techniques you learned in Chapter Six, double check your abstract for strong sentence structure and sentence variety. Next, add transitional words and phrases (covered
in Chapter Six) to create a unified, engaging abstract. Finally, follow the activities on the checklist below to be sure that your abstract includes all the required elements.

To be sure that your abstract contains the required elements, complete the following activities:

1. Circle each of the main points mentioned in your abstract.
2. Underline each place you mentioned a specific type of evidence used to develop your thesis statement.
3. Highlight the sentence that contains the conclusion reached by your research.
4. Draw a squiggly line under the sentence that presents the significance of your topic.
5. If your abstract contains all of the above elements, draw a large star on the top of your paper. Well done! 😊

Finally, as you are preparing your abstract, consider the abstracts you encountered as you searched the databases in the APUS library. Did you dismiss some articles based on the abstract alone? Did you find abstracts that were effective? What features made them effective? Consider these questions as you perfect your own abstract. While abstracts are a required element in APA documentation style, they may also be used in both Chicago and MLA styles as well. As you continue your education, you will undoubtedly be expected to write an abstract again. You can deepen your understanding of abstracts and the techniques required to write them by clicking on the following links: Writing Abstracts and Abstracts.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

If you have kept up with the assignments and activities in this chapter and the previous ones, you now have a completed draft and an abstract. You can take a deep
breath; you are well on your way to completing a quality research product, without last minute stress. As you have moved through the research and writing process, you have undoubtedly noticed that at each stage of the process, you have asked questions: questions about your integrity, about your audience and purpose, about your sources. At each step in the process, you have analyzed those questions, generated answers, and then applied those answers to your research and writing. You have honed your critical reading and writing skills. As we move to the final stages of the research and writing process, you will turn those questioning skills to your draft in order to create an engaging, informative, and significant research essay!

**REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED**


CHAPTER 8: IT’S NOT OVER ‘TIL THE REVISING, EDITING, AND PROOFREADING ARE DONE

INTRODUCTION

I hope you are not reading this chapter at 11:30 p.m. Sunday, minutes away from submitting your final paper. Once the research is complete and the first draft written, you may think you have finished your work; you have not! Last week, you composed the first draft of your paper (first draft, not final draft). Now as the submission deadline looms, it is time to polish the draft, double check citation format, revise for content and clarity, edit for sentence structure, and proofread for grammatical and spelling errors. This chapter will take you through the process of finalizing your draft and submitting the best possible paper.

REVISION

Before that process can begin, let us look at what each of those activities entails. The first step toward a polished final product is revision. Revision examines the effectiveness of the essay on a large scale; its concern is with the ideas in the essay, the arrangement of those ideas, and the language used to present those ideas to your audience. Revision requires you to approach your writing from a fresh perspective so it is best to begin revision after you have been away from you first draft for a while. A day or two is best, but if that is not possible, leave your draft for at least a few hours and then return and revise. Whatever time you can take away from your draft will help you to re-see and revise your essay. As necessary as revision is, it is the one stage of the writing process that is most often neglected. For students, time is often a factor in the failure to revise. I began this chapter with a tongue in cheek comment about reading it minutes before your final draft is due. If
that is true, you have denied yourself the opportunity to re-connect with your topic and to enhance your reader’s initial connection. All writers revise. This is my fourth revision of this chapter; an early rendition was over sixty pages long. You have benefitted from my revision process—now allow your readers the same chance to benefit from your revisions. In *The Craft of Revision*, Donald Murray makes the following observation about revision:

As writers we are saved from the stupidities of our first drafts by revision, the process of using language to see the subject again and again until we—and eventually the reader—see it clearly. But revision becomes far more than correcting errors for the working writer. Revision—re-seeing—is how the writer sees the world and understands its meaning. (4)

To begin your revision process, view [Reverse Outlining](#) and use the guiding questions below to re-see and revise your first draft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are my ideas reasonable and well supported?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have I maintained my focus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have I addressed audience concerns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do I need to add additional detail anywhere?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are there sections or details that do not mesh with my thesis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are there sections that are unclear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is the order of my ideas logical and easy to follow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have I used transitions and transitional phrases to link my ideas together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have I adopted an academic tone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Does my voice fit my topic and purpose?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see from the above chart, revision focuses on the content of your essay, the message you are trying to communicate to your reader. We tackle revision first because it makes no sense to correct spelling and rewrite sentences, only to delete them later in the process. Because revision is such an important first step, you will want to read more about it; to deepen your understanding of the revision process, click on the following links: Revision Handout and Writers on Revision.

**EDITING**

Once you have set your content and your organization, you can move on to the next stage of the process: editing. In the editing process, you are examining and perfecting the smaller details of your paper. Effective editing begins by reading your revised draft aloud. Use a highlighter to mark any awkward sounding sentences and begin your editing with the highlighted areas of your draft. While your focus is on sentences and words, you must also consider your purpose, ensuring that your sentences and words create a style that is appropriate for your rhetorical situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Editing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentences:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Are my sentences clear and concise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Are my sentences varied in length and design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I eliminated fragments, run ons, and comma splices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Are my sentences free of misplaced modifiers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Where appropriate have I used parallel structure or repetition for emphasis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I eliminated clichés and chosen the best word?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As evidenced in the above chart, in the editing process you may find yourself deleting or re-writing words, phrases, or entire sentences. Use this link to develop your editing skills and enhance your writing: Faculty Pet Peeves.

**PROOFREADING**

The final step in the process is proofreading. Here your focus narrows even more as you check and correct individual spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Proofreading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punctuation and Mechanics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I used <em>commas, dashes, colons, semicolons</em>, and <em>apostrophes</em> and <em>quotation marks</em> correctly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I separated my quoted material from my own writing by using quotation marks or indenting long quotes and included an in-text citation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I used <em>capitalization</em> correctly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Do my subjects and verbs agree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Do my <em>nouns and pronouns</em> agree?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I used <em>commonly confused words</em> such as <em>their/there/they’re and to/two/too</em> correctly? Note: spellcheckers will not find these errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I spelled every word correctly and used a <em>dictionary</em> to check spelling, if necessary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Have I followed the format of my chosen documentation style consistently?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOUR TURN

Review the handout and video linked here: Editing and Proofreading and Proofreading Video. Then test your proofreading skills by clicking on this link and completing the exercise: Proofreading Challenge.

The revising, editing, and drafting process is shaped like an inverted triangle, moving from a large overview to small details and ending with publishing, or for most students, submitting an assignment for a grade.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

At this point in the writing process, you may be tempted to simply run your papers through spell check and call them done; however, as you near the end of your writing process, you must re-focus your efforts; you must revise, edit, and proofread, following the steps in this chapter. As noted, there is a distinction between editing and revision. Editing
Research, Analysis, and Writing

looks at the surface details of the paper; revision examines the underlying meaning and organization of our paper. We revise before editing so that we can avoid wasting time editing sentences that may ultimately be cut in the editing process. Revising before editing forces us to address the deeper issues of meaning and structure and not get lost in surfaces issues such as word choice and sentence structure. Careful proofreading ensures that the final product is polished and professional. Here is one last checklist to consider before you submit your essay.

1. Have I clearly defined the problem? Be sure that the problem and the solution are clearly identifiable in your single sentence thesis statement.

2. Have I addressed the needs of my audience and selected details accordingly? Consider the different needs of an audience who easily accepts that the problem you are addressing exists and an audience who is unaware that the problem exists or does not believe it is a problem.

3. Have I explained my solution so that my readers will understand it and accept it as reasonable?

4. Have I supplied convincing evidence to show that my solution is viable? Consider audience objections here as well.

5. Have I reviewed and eliminated alternate solutions? Be sure you have documented support for the ineffectiveness of alternative solutions.

6. Have I formatted my essay in one consistent documentation style? Be sure that you have followed the citation guide in the course carefully, and you have not mixed elements of different citation styles. For example, APA documentation style requires a cover page and an abstract, while MLA style does not. Chicago documentation style requires a cover page and either footnotes or endnotes.
During this course, we have focused on two central themes:

1. The goal of all writing, including academic writing, is to communicate.
2. The tools we use to conduct and write research (analysis, evaluation, synthesis) are the same tools we use on the job and in our personal life.

I hope that over the course of this term, you have experienced the challenge and reward that comes with committed, purposeful writing. If you and I have all done our jobs, you will have some extra tools to add to your writer’s toolbox and be well prepared for the academic writing challenges that lie ahead. In addition, I will have the joy of reading engaging and informative research essays.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Paradigm Online Writing Assistant
Elements of Style
University of North Carolina Writing Center Video:
Why We Cite

REFERENCES AND WORKS CONSULTED
