RHODES COLLEGE

A Guide to Effective Paper Writing

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~ INTRODUCTION ~

For many students, the prospect of paper writing is daunting, dreaded, and, above all, frustrating. Sometimes it is hard to know where to start; sometimes the problem is with what has already been written; often it is the process in between. Instead of simply giving grammar instruction, this guide offers advice for every stage of writing an academic paper and will take you through the process of conceiving an essay subject, refining a thesis, researching evidence, developing an argument through analysis, clarifying your prose, and finally revising and proofreading your paper. The guide also provides useful information about correct documentation, grammar and punctuation, and writing etiquette.

This guide is not meant to replace the instruction of your professors, but rather to supplement it. Many of the suggestions and descriptions regarding writing have come from the Rhodes Writing Center director and tutors, English Department writing professors, and faculty and staff from across the college. When using this guide, please remember that it may not address every nuance of writing in every discipline; you should consult with your professor for questions that are not answered here.

You may also seek assistance with your writing at the **Writing Center** located in 122 Barret Library. In 30-minute sessions, trained tutors will help you at any stage of the writing process: brainstorming ideas, narrowing your topic, forming a thesis, outlining, re-organizing paragraphs, revising a draft, or even understanding professor feedback on a graded paper. To set up an appointment, go to: **https://rhodes.mywconline.com**

Ultimately, what both the Writing Center and this guide will help you with is seeing the relationship between your writing process and the resulting product, which is the paper that others—presumably your professor—will read. Essentially, every writer begins to write

according to his or her own process (some must have an outline, others dive right into the prose, and so on), but at some point that process must take shape for the reader. This guide will help you move through those stages.

~ I. THE WRITING PROCESS ~

The art of paper writing is generally a three-step process comprised of planning, writing, and revising. The planning stage includes asking and answering a lot of questions about your subject; the writing stage puts those answers into a developed argument; and the revising stage involves refining your thesis, possibly restructuring your paper, and proofreading.

A. Planning

1. Brainstorming

Before you begin to write, carefully read your assignment, paying special attention to identifying exactly what the professor has asked you to produce. Each type of paper has a specific goal to accomplish. For example, a history paper that compares the Battle of Bull Run with the Battle of Gettysburg seeks to sort out the similarities and differences between two events; an international studies paper that applies the realist theory of international relations to the context of the Cold War seeks to support a given theory through historical evidence. The topics and research you need to consider largely depend on what kind of paper you are writing. Therefore, the first step to writing a well-organized essay is to identify the type of essay you are assigned to write and plan your essay according to the guidelines given by your professor. To set up an appointment, go to:
www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/9039.asp

A typical problem students have with their writing assignment is selecting a subject (or argument about that subject) that is too broad to cover in the space of a single paper. The unfortunate result is a paper weighed down by generalizations, assumptions, and summary. When considering your subject, be sure to locate your own particular argumentative niche so that your paper will be a focused, thoroughly considered analysis and will be supported by ample, specific evidence.

Below is a series of questions to help you begin this process of narrowing your subject, conceiving of your argument, determining your evidence, and envisioning a structure for your paper.

***Subject**: What are you going to write about?*

- Is there a specific topic assigned for the paper? Do you have free reign to interpret the subject as you want or has the professor asked for particular information in the paper?
- What about the subject interests you? How can you narrow or interpret the subject in a way that suits your interests?
- What discussions from class about this subject were most provocative? What have you underlined in your text or taken notes on in class with regards to the subject? Do you see any trends?

***Purpose**: What is the purpose or goal of the paper?*

- Is it meant to persuade? Inform? Compare? Assess?
- Is the paper supposed to include outside sources?
- Is it meant to reach beyond class discussions and course texts? Are you being asked to reiterate a course idea or to expand on it?
- Are you required to answer specific questions?

***Argument**: What will your argument be?*

- What has your professor or someone else said about this subject that you disagree with or find puzzling?
- What is the most profound question you have about the subject? How can you turn that question into an argument: a thesis?
- What do you need to do (revisit, read, research) to help you establish a position about the subject?

***Evidence**: What type of evidence do you need to support the argument you will make about the subject?*

- Will you use only your own analysis? Or do you need to do any research?
- Are you being asked to incorporate others' critical ideas about the subject? Where do you find this sort of information?

- What kind of documentation is required? MLA? Chicago Style? APA?

***Organization**: What is the best way to organize your ideas?*

- Can you group together any of your ideas about the subject? Can you divide the subject into categories or "sub" subjects?
- Does one idea naturally follow another? Is one idea contingent on another? Do you want your reader to understand certain points before others? Are some points more important than others?
- If there is an assigned length, how will that affect your priorities?

As you answer these questions, you should keep the suggested essay length in mind. A ten-page research project requires lengthier topics and significantly more factual support than, for example, a three-page literary analysis. A well-organized paper uses the assigned space effectively; you should plan for and gather enough topical information to adequately complete the assignment and support the thesis before your writing begins. As a rule of thumb, a double-spaced page with one inch margins and 12-point text has approximately 300 words. With this in mind, you can generally conclude that a 1500-word assignment is about five typed pages and can plan your essay accordingly.

TIP: One productive way of **brainstorming** and asking and answering questions is to sit down with a peer, whether a friend or a tutor at the Writing Center, and have a 30-minute conversation about your ideas. Your professors are often happy to meet with you, too, to discuss your ideas about the paper. Be prepared, though, to take notes; in other words, bring a pen and paper.

2. Researching

If your assignment requires outside sources for evidence, you have one more step before you can begin outlining and then drafting. Researching can be intimidating, especially if you are having trouble figuring out what information you need and where to get it. Below

are some suggestions to get you started.

Research Questions

The first step in beginning research is to come up with research questions that you need to answer in order to prove your argument. The answers will be the evidence for your paper. At this stage, you might also consider adding possible sources for finding the information. For example, if you are arguing that—despite common assumptions that the Harry Potter series has increased reading frequency among adolescents—children today are still reading only as much as they did ten years ago, you might include the following questions (Q) and source (S) ideas:

- **Q**: How many adolescents read books before Harry Potter? **S**: Reference materials for the Literacy Council; history of adolescent book purchasing, library records.
- **Q**: How many adolescents read books today? **S**: Same sources as above but for current year.
- **Q**: What changes in education have occurred in the last ten years that might have affected reading habits? **S**: Department of Education curriculum and/or reading initiatives.
- **Q**: Are there any social or cultural changes that might have affected reading habits? **S**: Surveys on adolescent activities, behavior.

Search Words

Most students know what search words are and most can come up with an initial list of obvious search words for a topic. In the example of Harry Potter, the search words that come to mind immediately are *Harry Potter, JK Rowling, reading, adolescent, reading rates*, and even the individual book titles. However, if you restrict yourself to just these obvious words, your search will not yield enough results to build a formal paper and thoroughly prove your thesis. You must stretch your thinking to come up with additional terms for your search. For example, try adding these words to your list: *teen, pre-teen, literacy, behavior, books, kids, children, phenomenon, trends, literature, juvenile,*

media, television, Scholastic (publisher of HP books), *libraries, motivation, education*. By combining some of these terms, your searches will yield far more "hits" and potentially more interesting, certainly more productive, results.

Online Databases

The **Barret Library website** includes a comprehensive listing of online databases accessible through the library's pages. The college pays for subscriptions to these databases and their use is limited to current Rhodes students and staff. To access a database from on campus, you must be logged into a computer. To access one from off-campus, simply click on the database link from the Rhodes Online Database page, and you will be prompted for your Rhodes username and password.

Your first stop for research should be **sites.rhodes.edu/barret/**. On this page, you will find numerous options; the most popular link for perusing online databases is in the left box: click on the highlighted word "databases," which will take you to an extensive description of online databases and resources. Most of these databases are particular to specific fields or topics, such as psychology or "Civil War," but some encompass larger categories like "the Humanities" and some are purely reference sources like the Oxford English Dictionary. By clicking on the "more info" button, you can find out what kind of information the database offers. In most cases, a non-reference type database will ask for your search terms and then provide a bibliography of articles and (less often) books that include information about your subject. Be prepared to spend a good deal of time with the "Online Databases" website: this part of researching can be laborious because you will undoubtedly uncover many sources that you do not need, and weeding through the vastness of information can be tedious. However, if your goal is to produce "outside" evidence for your paper's argument, it is a necessary process.

Scholarly Articles

It isn't hard to figure out what constitutes a newspaper article or a survey, but determining what qualifies as a scholarly article can be difficult. At some point at Rhodes, you will be required to use scholarly or "critical" articles in a paper and you should be prepared by knowing what that means. A piece of scholarship is very different from any other kind of resource. In the simplest terms, *it is a text written by a scholar, reviewed and ultimately approved by scholars, and published by a scholarly source*. You must confirm these aspects of an article before you can consider it scholarly. The easiest way to determine the scholarliness of an article is to search for it in a database that covers only scholarly journals. These journals have an editorial board of experts in the field to review and approve the articles contained in each publication, including online editions. You might also consult the database "**MLA Bibliography of Periodicals**" and find the entry for the journal in which the article is published. This entry will tell you whether or not a journal is "peer-reviewed," which is another way of identifying scholarly work. You should consult with your professor for a list of databases or journals that are relevant in the field of your course study.

Internet Sources

Be wary of using the World Wide Web as a source for an academic paper's evidence. Although the internet provides a constant stream of information, it is often impossible to know where that information came from and whether or not it is accurate. It is especially dangerous to use the web for "scholarly" information. For example, if you are researching the effects of living near a particular chemical plant, you probably can find quite a bit of commentary on the web. You'll discover local newspaper articles debating the issue; you'll see the plant's own public relations announcements; you might even find blogs written by people living near the plant. Although some of this information might be anecdotally relevant to your topic, none of it can be considered scholarly evidence. It is simply commentary, probably from biased parties.

TIP: When you are compiling your evidence from an outside source, be sure either to print the actual text or to copy it verbatim—in quotation marks—so that you always have a record of the original. Students have been known to paraphrase a source text only to paraphrase again in the course of writing their paper and end up with a version that is too similar to the original. It is not worth the risk of being accused of an honor violation. You can find more information about quoting and paraphrasing in the next chapter: II. Intellectual Honesty.

3. Outlining

Once you have considered these "planning" questions, begun researching (if necessary), and established your basic argument or hypothesis, you should create an outline, which serves as the transition between your ideas and your draft and is basically a directional map—a step-by-step guide through the essay. You should write down your outline, even if it is informal; you might have only a "working title," a thesis statement, and one descriptive sentence for each body paragraph. Also at this stage of the planning process, you should remember to document any quotations or data from your texts or research that you intend to use in your draft. Be sure to include correct citations with your notes to avoid unintended plagiarism. For a more comprehensive and useful outline, follow the steps below.

Developing your Argument

To begin, determine the main points that support your thesis. Main points are essentially *claims* that will develop your larger argument. In "report" type papers, these points are topic sentences. A well-conceived thesis should direct you towards the nature, order, and relative value of your main points. (You can find more information about writing a thesis in the next chapter.) Not every claim will be of equal value, and some may need to come before or after others or be privileged in a particular way. These main points will constitute the Roman numerals in your outline.

Determining Evidence

Each main point or claim needs to be supported by evidence and analysis that essentially connects the evidence *to* the claim. For the sake of an outline, you should list pieces of evidence under their corresponding point and identify where to locate that evidence later (i.e., page number, source). If you encounter evidence contrary to your main points, you should determine how you can undermine that evidence, thus weakening a potential counter argument. Each piece of evidence can be listed with a capital letter under its corresponding Roman numeral "claim."

Organizing your Ideas

Once you have categorized your supporting points and evidence into an outline, you should check the format of your outline. A well-organized outline is logical and consistent and follows—from beginning to end—an understandable route, with one point building on the previous one or adding a new, but appropriate, idea. For example, if an outline for a history essay begins in chronological order, it must carry this logical format through to the end.

Documenting your Sources

Even at this stage of the writing process, you should remember to document any quotations or data from your texts or research that you intend to use in your draft. If you include correct citations at this point, you are less likely to forget or mis-cite a source in your final draft. Plus, you will have any easier time locating that information when you need it for your draft.

Moving from Outline to Draft

If you have carefully organized your outline, it will be much easier to expand it into a successful paper. Each main point in your outline will become a topic sentence or claim statement in your paper. A topic sentence is generally the first sentence in a paragraph that states the point (the topic) of that paragraph, and while it should create a transition from the previous paragraph, it should not just repeat or reword the last sentence of that paragraph. Paragraphs

that lack topic sentences are confusing, unfocused, even distracting. Each topic sentence should in some way relate to your thesis; that is, each topic sentence needs to support your thesis the way each main point supported the thesis in your outline. Your supporting points (evidence) in your outline will be used to write supporting sentences in your paragraphs. With a clear topic sentence and well-crafted supporting sentences drawn from your outline, each paragraph should be unified and focused on one main topic.

TIP: If you are really stuck even after answering the planning questions or if outlining has been unsuccessful, you might try **free writing**, an exercise developed by Peter Elbow in his book *Writing without Teachers* (Oxford: UP, 1998). In free writing, you write non-stop for about ten minutes on anything about your subject that comes to mind. During this time, you do not lift your pen from your paper or your fingers from the keyboard. You do not worry about sentence fragments, correct grammar, word choice, spelling, or coherency. You do not re-read as you write. You simply write. At the end of the ten minutes, you take from your writing sample whatever good ideas, phrases, and sentences you can and try again. Repeat the process again and again until you have something you can use for your paper. It may take several runs to get a few sentences worth keeping, but it definitely helps get past writer's block.

B. Writing

One of the most common mistakes that students make when paper writing is to put it off until the last minute; thus, there is rarely time to create a draft. First drafts can be particularly useful in that they allow for a stream of ideas while subsequent editing prevents these ideas from being disorganized or unclear. When you write a draft you also have the mental and emotional benefit of knowing this is not the final product and that you have time to make mistakes, correct them, throw out entire paragraphs, even change your thesis.

The first step in drafting a paper is to articulate a clear and cohesive thesis. Then, you should consider how the paper is divided into sections: an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

1. The Thesis Statement

Professors in first-year writing courses spend an entire semester teaching and reviewing the thesis statement, and so it stands to reason that, despite most students' familiarity with the term, the thesis is often the most difficult part of a paper to master. What exactly do professors mean when they ask for a clear thesis statement? And do they always have to be stuck at the end of your first paragraph? This section will help you answer these questions and teach you how to write strong, effective theses.

What exactly *is* a thesis statement?

A thesis is a succinct statement of your essay's main argument. It does not necessarily have to be limited to one sentence in length and should not be a self-evident conclusion with which anyone knowledgeable on the topic would fundamentally agree. In other words, your thesis should be your own personal, arguable, and defendable stance on a particular topic. The keyword here is "argument." Your thesis statement should make a relatively original claim that can be either proven or, at least, well-supported in your proceeding paragraphs. It is not an "opinion" because *by definition* an opinion needs no support. It is, rather, a position that acknowledges a certain precariousness and so needs support through analysis and evidence.

Your entire essay relies on your thesis. Therefore, in addition to being argumentative, a thesis should be concise, thorough, and clear. It should suggest that there is evidence to support it, and it should outline the major topics that will develop the argument throughout the essay.

How is a thesis different from a topic sentence?

Many students confuse the terms "thesis statement" and "topic sentence." The difference lies in the specificity and the arguability of the statement in question. A topic sentence is one that describes the

general subject of the paragraph or essay but does not address what exactly the writer wants the reader to conclude about the topic. A thesis statement, on the other hand, is a much more specific and, at some level, controversial statement *about* the topic. It is a claim up for debate based on interpretation of evidence. And it is a statement that needs support and development to be persuasive. It is not inherently persuasive or accepted.

The following examples illustrate the differences between topic sentences, statements of opinion, and thesis statements.

EXAMPLE

Topic Sentence:

In my essay, I will address the significance of color imagery in *The Great Gatsby*, especially the colors green, white, and brown.

Statement of Opinion:

Gatsby is foolish for attaching so much significance to the colors green and white.

Thesis Statement:

In *The Great Gatsby*, different colors define the boundaries between social classes, with grey, navy, and brown being associated with the poor in the Valley of Ashes, bright primary colors with the middle class in West Egg, and white, green, and muted colors with the wealthy in East Egg.

EXAMPLE

Topic Sentence:

In his novel, *1984*, George Orwell used war and battle metaphors.

Statement of Opinion:

Winston should not have succumbed to Big Brother's ideology.

Thesis Statement:

Orwell's *1984* is a critique of modernization and industrialization, in that it reveals the loss of individual identity for the sake of greater efficiency.

Thesis Placement

Most readers, including your professors, look for a thesis early on in your paper, but not necessarily at the end of the first paragraph. Thesis statements are usually most effective in the introduction because they do, in fact, introduce the argument. However, sometimes a paper is most persuasive if the thesis comes later. These are known as "delayed thesis" papers. In this instance, the paper works towards the thesis, which may be located in the middle or even at the end of the paper. The delayed thesis works particularly well for close analysis papers where the goal is to analyze the language rather than use the language to prove your analysis; a good example of this type of analysis is poetry explication. In addition, the delayed thesis can be used effectively for longer essays where the claim is too complex to contain within the first paragraph, or when the writer expects an initially hostile reaction to his or her thesis and wants to establish common ground with the reader first. It is worth noting, however, that while a delayed thesis can work exceptionally well, if not executed properly, it can make the paper disorganized and therefore more difficult for a reader to follow and understand. Because of this risk, less experienced writers should state their thesis early on, allowing the reader to get a strong grasp of the paper's argument from the start.

The Changing Thesis

Often during the course of writing or revising, it becomes clear that the thesis of your paper has changed. It may be that you've found new and different evidence than you anticipated or that you've simply realized a new argument through your analysis of the subject. Be aware of such shifts in your thinking and be sure to adjust your thesis statement accordingly. During the writing process make a conscious effort to ensure that your thesis is present and consistent in the essay, that every paragraph works to support and promote your thesis. Assuring that your reader can follow your argument is imperative in a persuasive essay.

2. Introduction

In general, an introduction is a paragraph (about 5-10 sentences or

100-200 words) and basically *introduces* the reader to your subject. In this section of the paper, avoid summarizing the topic and quoting or referring to specific evidence. Instead, begin contextualizing your claims and showing the direction the paper will take. Do not write so generally that your reader must search for your argument, and avoid phrases like "Throughout history" and "Since the beginning of time."

A strong introduction should

- Identify the subject of the paper.
- Engage the reader.
- Offer a general outline of the paper (what its structure will be).
- Communicate the argument.

An introduction might also

- Provide necessary background information. • Relay a story about or describe your topic.
- Establish your credibility as a writer on this subject (so the reader will trust your claims).
- Offer counter-arguments (against your thesis) that will "hook" the reader.
- Begin with a notable quotation that leads to your larger discussion.

3. Body Paragraphs

Once you've introduced your subject and stated your thesis, you then must organize your analyses, research, and ideas into fully developed body paragraphs. Careful, thoughtful organization is essential to ensuring that your paper is readable and persuasive. If, however, you structure your paper with one topic here and another topic dangling over there and no coherence whatsoever, the reader may lose interest or get so confused that your intended argument gets lost or misunderstood.

The body paragraphs of the paper should include—as fully articulated topic sentences—the claims you alluded to in your

introduction. These claims are like mini-thesis statements that both articulate the supporting point of and provide direction for the paragraph that follows (in the same way that the thesis itself provides direction for the entire paper). The ideas and evidence that follow should be relevant to and support this claim. If there is disjuncture, the evidence may belong in another paragraph or perhaps the claim needs better or different examples. Maybe the claim itself is faulty and doesn't adequately pull together the evidence that is meant to support it.

Linking Paragraphs

One distinguishing feature of a strong essay is that successive paragraphs are *linked* in a coherent fashion. In an outline, main points are bulleted, presented in isolation with no clear link from one idea to the next. Paragraphs developed in a paper, on the other hand, must be clearly connected to one another. They must be linked, either through *ideas* or *words*, in such a way that the reader can easily follow the development of your thesis.

An idea link is a connection (also called a transition) between two paragraphs based on a similar train of thought or repetition of an idea. Idea links tie the paragraphs together because the reader is clearly told how one paragraph relates to another by the related ideas they employ. An idea link may consist of a repeated phrase, a related anecdote, or a similarly worded summary of the idea previously presented.

EXAMPLE

In the following example, from "The Lost Year" by Dan Baum (*The New Yorker*, August 21, 2006, 46-59), the paragraphs are linked by the idea that the redevelopment of New Orleans after Katrina is a project with global appeal.

> Baker's proposal [to finance reconstruction] was big enough to save New Orleans. It would put money and options in the hands of homeowners. And it was tailored to appeal to Bush's sensibilities—government involvement would

> be temporary, and about half of the initial public outlay would be recovered when redeveloped properties were sold. The bill made New Orleans the greatest urban-revival opportunity in recent American history, and **planners and architects from around the world gathered to help**.
>
> **More than just New Orleans was at stake. A third of the world's population lives in coastal zones**, many of them in delta cities that may flood as the climate changes and seas rise. The Netherlands' complex of levees, fortified after a hurricane killed hundreds in 1953, is a respected flood-control model; done right, planners said, New Orleans could serve as another example of how to rebuild, smarter and better, a city flooded on an unprecedented scale. (Baum 49)

In the final sentence of the first paragraph, the author remarks that a government bill has attracted the attention of international building professionals, and in the opening of the second paragraph, he moves to more general concerns and hopes about urban development in flood risk areas around the world. Thus, Baum is linking the internationally popular proposal to revitalize New Orleans with growing global interest in securing and developing other coastal urban centers.

Where an idea link is a compositional link between paragraphs, a word link is a syntactic transition. Word links such as *however, although, needless to say, then, secondly, next, as it pertains to, as you can see, similarly, on the other hand, conversely, and subsequently*, signal to the reader that you are further developing a topic in this paragraph based on the information you have provided in previous paragraphs. Word links are very important because they allow your reader to follow your argument, seeing quickly and easily how each new paragraph pertains to the thesis and relates to the paragraph before it.

EXAMPLE

In the first sentence of the next paragraph of Baum's article, he uses

the word link "though" to show transition to a new idea (Note: the ellipses after the first sentence signals that a portion of the text has been removed by the editor of this guide).

> More than just New Orleans was at stake. . . . "We have this incredible, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reëngage and recalibrate this city in a way that, politically, you might never have been able to get to." Joseph Canizaro called the city a "clean sheet."
>
> In their enthusiasm to create a new city, **though**, the planners were up against New Orleanians' uncommon fondness for the old one. (Baum 49)

Word links and idea links make your paragraphs coherent; always check to ensure that transitional ideas and phrases connect each paragraph like directional markers on a map.

Sentence Structure

In addition to considering how your paragraphs logicially develop the argument set forth in your introduction, you should pay close attention to how your sentences develop the ideas presented in your paragraphs. Essentially, sentences are the building blocks of your paragraphs, and they should be clear, engaging, and varied. For example, make sure that parallel ideas exist within parallel phrases or sentences and that every sentence doesn't begin the same way. Sentences with the same word order or length produce the kind of monotony that is boring to readers. To make your sentences more interesting, add variety by making some longer than others and by finding alternatives to starting every sentence with the subject followed by the verb. Below are some strategies to help achieve that variety.

Combining Sentences:

- Combine two sentences into one longer sentence.
- Join the subject of two independent clauses into one sentence when the verb and the rest of the clause are the same.
- Join two predicates when they have the same subject.

Adding Words:

- Add a description about a noun *after* the noun or add an adjective *before* the noun.
- Add a *who, where,* or *which* clause after a noun.
- Add a modifying phrase or a clause to the beginning of a sentence.
- Begin with infinitives or with phrases beginning with **–ing** or **–ed** verbs.
- Begin with a dependent clause (i.e., beginning with *after, although, because, if, since, until, when, while*).

Changing Words, Phrases, and Clauses:

- Move adjectives to a new place in the sentence.
- Expand your subject into a phrase or clause.
- Change your sentence into a dependent clause and attach it to an independent clause.

In addition to having varied sentences, you should have efficient and precise language *in* those sentences. Remember to delete any unnecessary words or phrases and to maintain a consistent verb tense (usually the present tense), a consistent point of view (usually third person), and a consistent level of formality throughout the paper. You may use contractions, provided they are used correctly, and unusual sentence constructions provided they are used for an obvious stylistic or rhetorical purpose.

TIP: When writing the body of the paper, use the same **language** that you used in the introduction, especially if you coined a catchy phrase or defined an abstract concept with a specific word. By referring to things consistently throughout the paper, you make the paper more coherent and readable, even memorable. Consider this word or phrase like a thread running through your essay that keeps pulling the reader back to your subject.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion should reinforce the development of the argument and establish closure for the reader without blandly restating the thesis. Most conclusions begin with a summary of the major points or evidence in the paper. However, your conclusion shouldn't be simply repetitive. Upon reaching the conclusion to your paper, imagine the reader saying "Okay, I've been persuaded, but what does this mean to me?" or simply "So what?" Below are suggestions for writing a conclusion.

- Avoid quoting or presenting evidence (as with the introduction).
- Summarize the main body points as briefly as possible in the order they appear in the paper.
- Offer an explanation as to why this paper needed writing in the first place.
- Describe how your argument might have larger implications that extend beyond just the paper. Relate your thesis to a broader issue, showing that it has some meaning and relevance outside of an academic exercise.
- Point to the implications of your argument for further study in the field.
- Show exactly how your paper fits into the existing literature on the subject.

C. Revising

Many students think that revising is proofreading. It is not. Revising involves an in-depth analysis of how well you have communicated your ideas to your reader. It is a broadly scoped and yet often tedious process. Beware of the impulse to stop at your draft, without revising; just because you have something printed doesn't mean it's ready to hand in to your professor. Be prepared to move ideas, delete paragraphs, even shift the entire paper to a new thesis if necessary.

To begin revising, you should ask several fundamental, far reaching questions:

- Have you proven your thesis?
- Is your evidence adequate? Appropriate?
- Does each paragraph develop the argument?
- Do any paragraphs or points seem disconnected from the larger focus of the paper?
- Are sentences grammatically correct?
- Are the tone and language consistent?

If you are having trouble seeing from this critical perspective, it may help to distance yourself from the draft in order to look at it objectively. Consider putting it aside for a day or so before re-reading one last time. The difference between a first and a final draft can be significant and can make the difference of an entire letter grade, if not more. And ultimately, professors are not only looking at what you're saying, but also *how* you're saying it. For this reason the final editing stages can be the most important. You will need to approach revision with everything from argument to punctuation in mind.

1. Editing for Content and Argument

At this first stage in the revision process, you should concentrate on larger rhetorical concerns like a focused structure and a strong argument with adequate textual support. Your first step should be to read through the paper as a whole and ask yourself a) whether you accurately responded to the assignment or prompt, and b) whether you proved your own thesis.

The next step is to look for holes in your research or evidence. Are there possible challenges to your thesis that you have not addressed and refuted? Conversely, look for areas where you have included information that while interesting may not necessarily be relevant to your thesis. Your goal at this stage is to ensure that each paragraph contains adequate references, source material, and quotations that substantiate claims made by the thesis and topic sentences, and that those references and quotations are seamlessly embedded into the body of the paragraph. Do not include quotations that you do not explain or analyze. Quotations that are placed in the body of a

paper without analysis are called "dropped quotations." *These serve no analytical or persuasive purpose and detract from the overall effectiveness of your paper and evidence.* Do not include new information or ideas without connecting them to the topic sentence.

TIP: A **reverse outline** can be useful for determining whether or not your argument and structure work well together and whether or not your points are clear and organized. Go through the paper a paragraph at a time (even starting at the end to give you more objectivity). For each paragraph write a sentence summarizing the paragraph, but don't simply copy the topic sentence or claim. Consider these "summarizing" statements collectively in relation to your thesis. It might be that you must rework or reword the thesis to correspond with the rest of your paper.

2. Editing for Clarity and Style

There are several things to consider when editing for clarity and style. The first is organization, the second is language, and the third is transitions, or "links."

With changes to the content and thesis complete, reorganization is the next step. Using the reverse outline (see the TIP in previous section), number the sentences that describe each paragraph, revisit them in relation to the newly defined thesis. Reorder them where appropriate to ensure a logical progression of ideas. At this point you might notice that several paragraphs have the same topic or that one paragraph has more than one topic. Consider combining or dividing such paragraphs.

Next, look at each paragraph as its own entity. Are the ideas self-contained? Then look at each sentence individually. Does the sentence as it stands alone make sense? Avoid sentences that use the word "this" or "these" unless it is very clear to what "this/these" refers. Are your sentences ambiguous? Is your language appropriate? Have you used language correctly? Don't use words that you don't understand.
Finally, in the same way that paragraphs should be linked, so should

sentences be linked. A link may be thematic or syntactic. A thematic link is a repeated idea or fact that reminds the reader how or why the new sentence relates to what has been said before. A syntactic link is a word or phrase that indicates to the reader some sort of order that helps him or her organize the flow of ideas.

EXAMPLE

Unlinked sentences:

> *The library's hours of operation do not provide for all students' academic needs. On Friday night the library closes at five o'clock.*

Thematically linked sentences:

> *The library's hours of operation do not provide for* ***all students' academic needs****. On Friday night the library closes at five o'clock leaving* ***students who need*** *to study or research during that time with no place to go.*

In the above example, the repetition of "students' needs" provides a clear link between the ideas expressed in the two sentences. Without the thematic link, as seen in the unlinked example, the reader is unsure why it is significant or relevant that the library closes at 5:00 on Friday night.

EXAMPLES

Unlinked sentences:

> *Many students like to dine outdoors. There are four outside tables at the Refectory.*

Syntactically linked sentences:

> *Many students like to dine outdoors.* ***However,*** *there are* ***only*** *four outside tables at the Refectory.*

In the above example, "however" links the first sentence to the second one, suggesting that the number of tables is insufficient for the number of students who wish to eat outside. This point is further articulated by inserting "only" into the second sentence.

Words and phrases like *however, although, in that regard, therefore, then, on the other hand, contrary, alternatively, furthermore, similarly* give your reader a syntactic clue that the sentence they are now reading is related to the previous sentence. Syntactic links make it much easier to follow

a rhetorical argument because they pull the reader through the consecutive build-up of ideas.

TIP: The **Paramedic Method** is a particularly effective method of editing and was created by Richard Lanham in his book *Revising Prose* (NY: Longman, 2006). This method works especially well when you want to make sure that the paper is in active voice and the sentences are clear and concise. Begin by circling the prepositions: *before, after, in, on, to, apart, for, into, above, from, by, beside, over, among, through, around, between*, etc. Too many prepositions pollute and belabor the paper. Remove as many of the prepositions as possible to ensure that your prose remains clear and concise. Then circle the "is" forms. Though technically a verb, the "is" construction is weak. Replace these "to be" verbs with action verbs in active voice. To figure out if your paper uses active or passive voice, look at each sentence individually and ask, "Where's the action?" For example, "Who's kicking whom?" Then put this kicking action in a simple (not compound) active verb, "The boy kicked the girl" (active) versus "The girl was kicked by the boy" (passive). Be direct in your prose: don't force a reader to decipher what you mean. Don't say things like "the fact is" or "the thing that this brings us to;" instead, get right to your point. Your prose will be less wordy, and you will sound more forceful and credible. Finally, go through and take out unnecessary words. Look at your longer sentences, and try to get them down to as few words as possible without changing the original and intended meaning.

3. Proofreading

Proofreading for grammar and punctuation is the final stage of editing. After you've addressed the broad concerns of revision (argument, organization, and clarity), edit the draft at the sentence level, looking for fragments, misspellings, punctuation errors, verb tense inconsistencies, and so on. *Do not rely on your word processing software to detect errors.* Consider reading your paper aloud to find changes in tense, awkward or wordy passages, and to help you determine whether you've employed proper grammar. If you find yourself having to re-read or pause, it is generally a good indication that something is amiss. By reading aloud, you'll also be able to easily

detect any unnecessary repetition.

4. Formatting

The final step in revising is to check your formatting. Include your name, your professor's name, your class and the date all double-spaced in a block to the left of your first page. Also be sure to include any other information required by your professor; for example, a word count or your student ID.

EXAMPLE

Michelle Hope

Professor Finlayson

English 230

May 14, 2006

Dividing the Father:

Patriarchy and Power in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

There should be one return between the heading and your title. Titles should not be underlined or italicized and should not contain a period. If your title contains the title of a book, the book title should be italicized or underlined. Titles of articles or short stories should be set in quotation marks. Some professors might prefer that this information be included on a title page rather than on the first page of your paper. Title pages (which are required for papers written in Chicago Style) should also include a word count and your pledge to uphold the honor code.

EXAMPLE

Dividing the Father:
Patriarchy and Power in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Michelle Hope
Professor Finlayson
English 465
May 14, 2006

Pledged:

_____

Word Count: 1500

5. Citing

College level writing demands evidence. Students typically are given free range to make any analysis they see fit provided that they can substantiate such claims with textual evidence and often with critical research. And, in fact, the *way* you cite depends very much on the nature of the evidence you use and the way you are using it. Imagine, for example, that you are writing a literary analysis of John Milton's *Lycidas* and you want to examine the poet's words, "Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more, / For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead." It might not occur to you that a poem requires a different format of citation than regular books, or that the format for these citations would differ greatly depending on whether you were writing a literary analysis or using *Lycidas* as an example of anti-Anglican rhetoric in a historical paper on the English Civil War. In a literary analysis you would use the ***Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th ed.** (New York: MLA, 2009), while in a history

paper you would use the ***Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed.** (Chicago: UP, 2010) or Kate Turabian's more compact ***A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed.** (Chicago: UP, 2013).

While these style manuals dominate writing-heavy disciplines within the humanities, other style manuals include *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: UP, 1994) and *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 5th ed. (Washington: APA, 2009), which govern research writing in the sciences and social sciences, respectively.

MLA In-Text Citations

In addition to including a final list of the sources you used, you will be citing throughout your paper. You should cite whenever you include information from an outside text or source, whether that information is quoted or paraphrased. In MLA format, your in-text citations are "parenthetical" in that they appear at the end of the source material or reference in parentheses. Here you must include the author's name, if it is not already self-evident by the way you've introduced the information, and the page number. Do not use a comma or the word/abbreviation "page/pg/p" between the author's name and the page number. Occasionally, you must include additional information in a parenthetical citation; for example, if you use more than one article by a single author, you must include the author, the article title, and the page number. The "common sense" key to all citations (particularly in-text ones) is to accurately and thoroughly communicate to your reader where you got the information.

As you write, keep in mind that different types of texts require different kinds of information in their parenthetical citations.

Poetry

If the poetic quotation consists of three lines or less, you should insert a diagonal line to indicate a line break in the actual poem (as is done in the example below); if the poetry extract is more than three lines long, however, then the quotation should be blocked and indented

one-inch (retain double spacing). Moreover, the correct MLA format for in-text citation is to put the line numbers in parentheses (175-177), or if the author is not named in the sentence, then to write the author's name followed by the line numbers (Milton 175-177).

EXAMPLE

From a paper on Milton's *Lycidas:*

> When the speaker declares in the penultimate verse paragraph of Milton's *Lycidas,* "With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, / And hears the unexpressive nuptial song, / In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love" (175-177), the pagan image of nectar, the food of the gods, merges with the Christian marital song of God's "blest kingdoms."

Prose

If you are citing prose in-text (whether a scholarly book, journal, literary work, etc.), then the quotation or other information should be introduced and then separated by either a comma or a colon (if the excerpt is over three typed, double-spaced lines on your screen, remember to block and indent). Once again, the author's name and the page number should be in parentheses, and the period comes after the parenthetical citation. If your quotation is long enough to be block indented, omit the quotation marks and place the final period before, not after, the parenthetical citation.

The following example demonstrates how to format a quotation within a quotation—use single quotation marks on either side of the borrowed phrase (the phrase 'affable archangel', from *Paradise Lost*).

EXAMPLE

From a paper on George Eliot's *Middlemarch:*

> Just before Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon, the narrator uses free indirect discourse to articulate how her vision of marriage is marred by literary allusion (and illusion): "For he had been as instructive as Milton's 'affable archangel'; and with something of the archangelic manner he had told her how he had undertaken

> to show. . .that all the mythical systems of the world were corruptions of a tradition originally received" (Eliot 24).

The use of ellipsis (…) denotes that something has been left out of the sentence; when using ellipsis remember to maintain the sense of the sentence and not to misconstrue the author's meaning.

EXAMPLE

From an evaluation of the Rhodes Summer Writing Institute:

> According to a recent survey conducted over a seven-year period, approximately 20% of the students who attend the Summer Writing Institute at Rhodes eventually matriculate at the college (Finlayson 1).

This sentence does not use quotation marks because it paraphrases the source material. It *does* include a citation.

Play

When quoting a play, list the act, scene, and line numbers parenthetically; for example (3.2.21-23). Do not include the words "Act" or "Scene." All other rules remain the same.

TIP: In a paper with outside sources, you always want to **signal** to the reader when your own commentary or argument ends and the source material begins. "Signaling" not only helps the reader understand the shifts in your paper, it also helps your credibility by showing what is your idea versus another writer's. You can signal such a shift by using phrases like "According to psychologist Julie Steel in her article on altruistic behavior" or "In his book on David Foster Wallace, Marshall Boswell argues."

MLA Works Cited

The standard MLA works cited page requires double spacing and lists the author, title of the work, publisher, year of publication, and page numbers (if applicable); any deviations from this format are

noted below. Also, a hanging indent must be applied to each citation, and titles of books and journals must be underlined or italicized, while essays, poems, articles, and short stories must be in quotations.

Book

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Journal article

Cahill, Edward. "Federalist Criticism and the Fate of Genius." *American Literature* 76.4 (2004): 687-717.

Essay in a scholarly book or collection of essays

Knoepflmacher, U.C. "Fusing Fact and Fiction: the New Reality of *Middlemarch*." *This Particular Web: Essays on Middlemarch.* Ed. Ian Adam. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975. 43-72.

Work in an Anthology

Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing. The Norton Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997. 1381-1444.

Book by two or more authors

Eggins, Suzanne, and Diana Slade. *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London: Cassell, 1997.

An Edition

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Ed. Claudia Johnson. New York: Norton, 2001.

A Poem

Jonson, Ben. "On My First Son." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Sixteenth Century-The Early Seventeenth Century*. Ed. M.H. Abrams. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.

A Translation

Allende, Isabel. *Daughter of Fortune*. Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. New York: Harper, 2000.

An Electronic Source

Bing, Gordon. *Due Diligence: Planning, Questions, Issues*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. NetLibrary. Web. 19 July 2010.

TIP: With so much of contemporary **research published online**, you probably will have articles or other types of sources that are not technically "in print" or for which you have no hardcopy. Still, the "publication" information should be clear. For example, an article that appears in full text in an online journal should have an author, a title, a date of "publication," even page numbers, just like a hardcopy. If the online version does not offer page numbers, exhaust all possible avenues of inquiry to establish what the original page numbers are. *As a last resort*, print out the document and cite the pages according to the page breaks in the printed copy. In any case, when citing online sources, you should conform to the same guidelines as you would for printed editions, with one addition: include in your MLA Works Cited the date you accessed the online source. Note: MLA no longer requires the use of URLs in MLA citations. If your instructor requires the URL, then MLA suggests that the URL appear in angle brackets after the access date. < >

Chicago In-text Citations

Chicago style retains formatting nearly identical to MLA for blocking quotes, using quotation marks, inserting ellipsis, and knowing when to quote, but Chicago style does differ in that it mandates a use of endnotes or footnotes (rather than parenthetical citations) for each quotation or other source material.

When quoting a source in Chicago style, be sure to place the superscripted number after the quotation marks; for example, "Even if more people were becoming literate [in the Stuart Age], it does not necessarily follow that they read or were taught new, 'modern'

ideas."[13] The footnote includes author, title of work, publication information, and page number and reads as follows:

13. Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age* (New York: Longman Group, 1980), 59.

Each succeeding footnote referring to this same source would be abbreviated:

Coward, *The Stuart Age*, 59.

Chicago Bibliography

Chicago Style stipulates that you include either footnotes or endnotes for all individual quotations and source materials, but you must also compile a bibliography following your list of endnotes (if you did indeed choose endnotes over footnotes). Although similar to an MLA Works Cited, Chicago Style Bibliographies are single-spaced with double spacing only between entries.

Book

Kenny, Colum. *Tristram Kennedy and the Revival of Irish Legal Training, 1835-1185*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996.

An Edition

Rolle, Andrew F. *California: A History*. 5th ed. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1998.

Work in an Anthology:

Loewenstein, Joseph. "The Script in the Marketplace." In *Representing the English Renaissance*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, 265-278. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

Journal Article

Kelly, Michael. "The Nationalization of the French Intellectuals in 1945." *South Central Review* 17, no. 4 (2000): 14-25.

Translation

Guerra, Tonino. *Abandoned Places*. Translated by Adria Bernardi. Barcelona: Guernica, 1999.

Full Text Online Journal Article

Montgomery, David. "Presidential Address: Racism, Immigrants, and Political Reform." *Journal of American History* 87. no. 4 (2001): 1253-74, accessed month/dd/yyyy, http://

~ II. INTELLECTUAL HONESTY ~

Plagiarism is serious. It can range from using someone's ideas without giving proper authorial credit to trying to pass off someone else's work as your own. Don't underestimate your professor. All are well-versed in current scholarship and are aware of the existence of less credible sources of information in the form of websites and "study aids." Plus, through the course of a semester, professors get to know your writing style, your writing skills, and your writing potential, and they can often sense when a paper—or part of a paper—isn't your own. Given this, it is more likely than not that, if you plagiarize, your professor will know and will report you to the Honor Council. The consequences could be as severe as expulsion from the college.

A. To Cite or Not to Cite?

In **Honor Council** hearings, students often defend their errors by stating that they do not know when they must cite a source and when they can simply include information without documentation. Although this section explains explicitly when a citation is required and when it is not, you should always ask your professor for clarification if you have any uncertainties about acknowledging your sources.

1. Uncited

The following types of information do not require a citation:

- Personal experience or interpretation
- Observation
- Common knowledge, found in multiple, common sources (e.g., "The American Civil War lasted from 1861-1865"). If you are ever unsure whether or not the knowledge is "common," consult your professor or provide a citation, even if it is extraneous.

TIP: Deciding whether or not certain information constitutes "**common knowledge**" can be tricky. Here are some rules of thumb for making this determination: If the information is not "common" to your own college-educated knowledge, then you should probably cite it. If the information is common knowledge, but you use the exact language of the source, you must quote and cite it. If the information is common enough that a reasonably educated person like yourself *should* know it, then it is probably safe to leave it uncited.

2. Cited

More often than not, the outside information you use for a written assignment *will* require a citation or will otherwise be considered plagiarized. Different departments or disciplines (e.g., psychology, English, biology, theater) may have particular guidelines regarding citation, but the basic rule is the same: *Generally speaking, if someone else already said or wrote it, you must cite it, regardless of when or in what context you read or heard about it and regardless of whether or not the source is your roommate, a scholar, your professor, or an anonymous writer.* In some cases, you may even have to do additional research to find out exactly how, when, and where the information originally appeared. Here is a general list of what needs textual documentation:

- Quotations, including those from any published or unpublished source (e.g., scholarly articles, class texts, websites).
- Paraphrased and interpreted text and ideas, including summaries or sections of articles, entire books, professor's lectures, previously read material, reviews, abstracts. This list is not exhaustive and you should consult with your professor if you have any question about the use and documentation of a source.
- Data or information—including statistics, graphs, polls, surveys—from reference materials.

For more information about formatting your citations, please see the preceding chapter's section on citing and consult your professors about which citation format is used in their respective disciplines. If you are ever in doubt about whether or not to cite

a source, consult your professor or err on the side of caution and cite it.

B. When to Quote and When to Paraphrase

Generally, you should only quote when you want to analyze or emphasize the actual language of the quoted source. If the language itself is not relevant, then you should paraphrase.

1. Quote

A text that exhibits the following characteristics would be a candidate for quotation rather than paraphrase:

- Conspicuous structural features (i.e., repetition, parallelism)
- Esoteric or otherwise particular language, word choice
- Language that defies paraphrasing
- Tonal emphases (i.e., sarcasm, irony)

2. Paraphrase

On the other hand, if a text or source does not exhibit these characteristics but you find the information important to include, you should paraphrase. This is often where people find themselves in trouble. *Anytime you paraphrase, you must document your source.*

Basically, you should paraphrase (rather than quote) when

- The information needs summarizing.
- Specific textual issues (language, tone, structure) are not important or particularly revealing.
- The passage includes extraneous information.

There are very specific, widely accepted rules for paraphrasing. Be sure to follow each step or risk creating prose that sounds and looks too similar to the original text and therefore is susceptible to the accusation of plagiarism.

1. Identify the key elements of the sentence or paragraph that are important to your point.

2. Change the vocabulary.
3. Change the structure of the sentence(s) by, for example, moving clauses, forming new parallelisms, shifting from passive to active voice.
4. Maintain the general chronology and priority of ideas in the source text.
5. Cite your source according to your professor's formatting standards.

EXAMPLES

The original text

"Types of Plagiarism." **plagiarism.org.** dd/month/yyyy.

"Anyone who has written or graded a paper knows that plagiarism is not always a black and white issue. The boundary between plagiarism and research is often unclear. Learning to recognize the various forms of plagiarism, especially the more ambiguous ones, is an important step towards effective prevention. Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like 'copying' and 'borrowing' can disguise the seriousness of the offense" ("Types of Plagiarism").

A strong paraphrase

According to contributors at plagiarism.org, both writing students and professors alike understand the gray zone that plagiarism inhabits. It is frequently confusing to detect when research has, in fact, become plagiarism. If you become aware of the wide range of plagiarizing possibilities, you have a better chance of avoiding mistakes. Most consider borrowing or copying another's words or ideas to be plagiarism, and therefore fail to recognize that plagiarism is much more serious ("Types of Plagiarism").

An appropriate summary

Because types of plagiarism are so varied and are more serious than just borrowing or copying, students should familiarize themselves with all the rules of research and plagiarism in order to avoid making mistakes ("Types of Plagiarism").

Poor paraphrasing=plagiarism

Any student who has written a paper or any professor who has graded one knows that plagiarism is not an either/or situation. The line between plagiarism and research is frequently not as clear as it might seem. Learning to see the different types of plagiarism, particularly the ambiguous types, is a good step towards effectively avoiding them. Many students think of plagiarism as copying someone else's text or borrowing someone's ideas, but words like these can confuse the severity of the problem.

It is critical to remember that citing a source after poorly paraphrasing does not exempt you from an Honor Code violation. You cannot have language somewhere *between* paraphrasing and quoting: you must *either* paraphrase properly *or* quote *and in both cases* cite your source.

C. The Honor Code

Below is an excerpt from the Rhodes College Honor Council Constitution that articulates the Honor Code with regards to writing.

The term "cheating" is defined as the attempt or act of willfully giving or receiving unauthorized aid from any source on academic course work.

"Cheating" includes plagiarism. Plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty. A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgment. **A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following:**

1. Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written.
2. Paraphrases another person's actual words, either oral or written.
3. Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory.
4. Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material unless the information is common knowledge.

For a full copy of the Honor Code, visit this file: **https://handbook.rhodes.edu/honor-council-constitution**
And for more information about the Honor Council, visit their website: **https://www.rhodes.edu/content/honor-council**

~ III. GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION ~

For some, maintaining proper grammar is easy and even instinctive, but many students never feel like they have a firm grasp of the basic rules of grammar—and punctuation—or how to apply those rules to their prose. Below are some basic rules and definitions.

A. Sentence Structure

A sentence is a series of conjoined words relating to the same subject, object, and action (verb). Thus, in order to be complete, a sentence must always contain a direct or implied object, subject, and verb. The subject is the thing doing the action; the object is the thing to which the action is being done; and the verb describes the action.

1. Clauses

Two kinds of clauses exist in sentences: the **independent** (main) clause, which is grammatically complete and therefore can stand alone as a complete sentence, and the **dependent** (subordinate) clause, which is grammatically incomplete and needs to be connected somehow to an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

EXAMPLE

> *While the students were away during the summer, the college renovated the empty dorms.*

The clause **pre**ceding the comma is dependent, and the clause **pro**ceeding the comma is independent.

2. Sentence Fragments

Fragments are often dependent clauses that haven't been connected to an independent clause or they are incomplete because they lack a subject or verb or both.

EXAMPLES

While the students were away during the summer, the college renovated the empty dorms. Because it is difficult to get painting and repairs done when the students are living on campus.

The first sentence is complete with both a dependent and independent clause. The second "sentence" is actually just another dependent clause and therefore must be considered incomplete or a fragment. To correct the fragment, connect it to the first sentence.

Because it is difficult to get painting and repairs done when the students are living on campus, the college renovated the empty dorms while the students were away during the summer.

3. Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences contain two independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. In other words, there is no conjunction or punctuation between the clauses. Run-ons can be rectified by inserting the missing links or punctuation.

EXAMPLES

Rhodes has needed a thriving social hangout since Briggs closed its pub over a decade ago and now that the renovation of the Lynx Lair is complete, students finally will have that much needed venue.

This run-on sentence has two independent clauses separated by the word "and" with no punctuation. In order to correct the problem, either add a comma before the "and" or replace the "and" with a semi-colon.

Rhodes has needed a thriving social hangout since Briggs closed its pub over a decade ago, and now that the renovation of the Lynx Lair is complete, students finally will have that much needed venue.

OR

Rhodes has needed a thriving social hangout since Briggs closed its pub over a decade ago; now that the renovation of the Lynx Lair is complete, students finally will have that much needed venue.

4. Parallelism

If a sentence conveys parallel ideas, then it should also employ parallel

form. In other words, the language and structure of the sentence's parts should mimic the content.

EXAMPLES

Without parallel structure:

> *Barret Library has provided students with a plethora of resources, and the students also have a beautiful environment for study.*

Here, the ideas are parallel—the library has given students two things—but the structure of the sentence places *students* as the indirect object in the first clause and as the subject in the second clause.

With parallel structure:

> *Barret Library has provided students not only with a plethora of resources but also with a beautiful environment for study.*

In the parallel example, the preposition "with" repeats, and the word pairs "not only" and "but also" link the two prepositional phrases.

EXAMPLES

Without parallel structure:

> *The apostrophe has three main uses: to form possessives of nouns, in a contraction, and to indicate plurals of lowercase letters.*

This sentence lacks parallelism because the first and third items in the list include infinitives and plurals while the second item does not include an infinitive and is singular.

With parallel structure:

> *The apostrophe has three main uses: to form possessives of nouns, to create contractions, and to indicate plurals of lowercase letters.*

Now all of the items in the list include infinitives and plurals, forming parallelism.

5. Dangling or Misplaced Modifiers

A **dangling** modifier is a word or phrase that modifies either the wrong word or no word in the sentence. In other words, *what* the modifier modifies is not clear. This can usually be solved by rearranging the

sentence. A **misplaced** modifier appears at the wrong place in the sentence and thus appears to modify the wrong word.

EXAMPLES

Dangling modifier:

While running across the fields, mud covered my boots.

The problem with this construction is that "mud" appears to be running. To rectify this and clarify the subject (the thing being modified), name the subject in the independent clause:

While running across the fields, I got mud on my boots.

Misplaced modifier:

I got mud on my boots while running across the field.

The problem with this construction is that "boots" appear to be doing the running when "I" should clearly be doing the running. The solution is to move the modifier next to "I." Both the dangling and misplaced modifiers are corrected in the following example:

While running across the field, I got mud on my boots.

B. Verbs

A verb is the part of the sentence that describes the action, the occurrence, or state of an object. For the purposes of writing academic papers, the key terms to remember are "agreement" and "consistency."

1. Subject-Verb Agreement

If a subject of the sentence contains two or more nouns or pronouns, it is important that the verb agree with the plural subject. While a sentence containing a single subject might correctly read "John is going to the store," a sentence containing a plural subject (or two subjects) should read "Anna and John are going to the store." Here, the "to be" verb has been altered from the singular "is" to the plural "are."

2. Verb Tense

One of the biggest mistakes that students make, often unintentionally, is to change tense throughout the course of their papers. This can be confusing for the reader. As a general rule, most non-narrative writing is written in the simple past (I wrote) or simple present (I write).

Use present tense to relate the events of a piece of fiction (play, short story, novel) because the events, in effect, continue to happen every time someone reads the text.

EXAMPLE

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the lovers inhabit a typical Green World.

Use past tense to refer to an author or an author's ideas as historical entities.

EXAMPLE

Shakespeare wrote A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1595 or 1596.

Use present tense to state facts and to refer to continuing actions. This differs from the present perfect tense (I have written), which describes action occurring before the time of the narration. It can also be used to narrate action that began in real life in the past but is not completed, may continue, or may be repeated in the present or future.

EXAMPLE

Psychologists continue to assess the impact of the digital age on childhood behavior.

3. Passive and Active Voice

Passive constructions are those in which something other than the subject is doing the action. Because of this inherent confusion, passive voice is weak and should only be used for a specific and clear stylistic or rhetorical purpose.

You can recognize passive-voice expressions because the verb phrase will always include a form of the "to be" verb, such as *am, is, was, were, are,* or *been*. Remember that these are not mutually exclusive: while the "to be" verb is required for passive voice, just because a sentence has a "to be" construction does not mean that it is passive.

EXAMPLES

Passive voice:

The ball was kicked.

Active voice:

The children kicked the ball.

In the active voice sentence, there is no question about who is kicking the ball.

Active voice sentence constructions are clearer, more concise, and more direct because the subject is, in fact, doing the action of the verb and nothing is implied or left unsaid.

C. Language

Elements of language—rules and choices about words—can drastically alter the meaning of the sentence. If you use "that" instead of "which," for example, you are implying that the phrase that follows is a required part of the definition of the words or concepts in the sentence, and this interpretation may change your entire point. Below are descriptions of the most common language choices you must make in writing.

1. *That* versus *Which*

Knowing when to use "that" and "which" puzzles many writers. The basic difference in the use of "that" and "which" is the nature of the clause that follows. **Nonessential** clauses can be connected to the sentence using "which," while **essential** clauses—in other words, those that significantly change the meaning of the sentence—can be connected to the sentence using "that." Essential clauses do not need commas. You can also think of these clauses as **nonrestrictive**

and **restrictive**. Nonrestrictive clauses tell you something about the subject of a sentence, but they do not restrict the meaning. Restrictive clauses, on the other hand, limit the possible meaning of the subject.

A helpful way to determine whether or not your clause is essential (restrictive) is to read your sentence aloud both with and without the clause. If the two sentences convey specifically different meanings, your clause is essential and you must use "that."

EXAMPLES

Nonessential or nonrestrictive clause:

The poetry reading, which was held at Otherlands, was successful.

The poetry reading was successful (the location was not a factor in this).

Essential or restrictive clause:

The poetry reading that was held at Otherlands was successful.

The poetry reading at Otherlands (but not necessarily elsewhere) was successful, or that out of all the locations where readings took place, Otherlands had the only successful poetry reading.

Nonessential or nonrestrictive clause:

The minor medical center, which is in the Baptist healthcare network, is on Poplar Avenue.

This sentence establishes that the medical center is on Poplar Avenue; the fact that it is in the Baptist healthcare network is extraneous information.

Essential or restrictive clause:

The minor medical center that is open on Sunday is on Poplar Avenue.

This sentence conveys that the particular medical center location on Poplar is open on Sundays. The fact of its Sunday hours is critical to the meaning and so the clause must be essential or restricted by using "that."

There are of course exceptions, and this rule applies only when referring to inanimate objects or nameless animals. When referring to a human being or named animal, you should use "who" or "whom." Whom is an objective form of "who."

EXAMPLES

The professor who won the Clarence Day Teaching Award is Patrick Shade.
The professor to whom we owe the loudest round of applause is Patrick Shade.

2. Prepositions

A preposition links nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other words in a sentence. The word or phrase that the preposition introduces is called the object of the preposition. Some common prepositions include the following:

about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, beyond, but, by, despite, down, during, except, for, from, in, inside, into, like, near, of, on, out, over, to, with

Formal writing should not have sentences that end in prepositions. Prepositions should be moved to the beginning of the clause.

EXAMPLES

Faulty construction:

Grammar is something I need help with.

Correct construction:

Grammar is something with which I need help.

3. Apostrophes and Contractions

The apostrophe has three main uses: to form possessives of nouns, to create contractions, and to indicate plurals of lowercase letters.

To form possessives of nouns add **'s** to the singular form of the word, add **'s** to the plural forms that do not end in **–s**, add an **'** to the end of plural nouns that end in **–s**, and add **'s** to the last noun in a list to show joint possession of an object.

Apostrophes are used in contractions. A contraction is a word in which one or more letters have been omitted. The apostrophe shows this omission. To use an apostrophe to create a contraction, place an apostrophe where the omitted letter(s) would go.

Be careful. Many words and contractions that are phonetically identical have different meanings. For example "they're" means "they are," which differs from "their" (possessive) and there (place). Also, "you're" means "you are," which differs from "your" (possessive).

4. Pronouns

Pronouns replace and refer to other nouns. Many students use ambiguous pronoun references. To avoid this mistake, all pronouns in your paper should accurately and clearly refer to their appropriate nouns. For example, never use the pronoun "their" when referring to something that belongs to "someone," and never use "he" if there are two male possibilities in the sentence.

EXAMPLE

Inconsistent, faulty reference:

A student at Rhodes must register for their classes online.

"Student" is singular; whereas "their" is plural. The consistent, correct reference is below:

Students at Rhodes must register for their classes online.

A student at Rhodes must register for his or her classes online.

Double, unclear reference:

Brian and Michael, having saved up enough money for a spring break trip, decided to drive down to Florida and stay in his father's condo at the beach.

"His" could refer to Brian or Michael. To correct, replace "his" with the correct name in possessive form.

The teachers claim that grammar rules are clear, but they are confusing.

"They" could refer to teachers or rules. Which are confusing: the teachers or the rules?

D. Punctuation

1. Colons

A colon is like an equal sign: it means that what comes after the colon explains or results from what comes before the colon. In the same way, the colon also announces what follows: a list, a quotation, or a qualification.

EXAMPLES

The meeting included the following administrators: the Provost, her assistant, and the Associate Dean.

The new $40 million library could not have been built without the generosity of a devoted alumnus: the money was a gift from Paul Barret, Jr.

2. Semicolons

A semicolon connects two independent clauses that have similar ideas or content and are not otherwise joined by a comma with a coordinating conjunction. Be especially careful with semicolons, as misusing them can result in fragments.

EXAMPLE

Rhodes is a top liberal arts college; it consistently ranks in the first quartile of colleges nationwide.

3. Commas

A comma is used to separate terms in a list, to separate a long introductory phrase or dependent clause from the main clause, to separate a non-restrictive clause or incidental phrase, and to separate independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, yet, or, nor, for*).

EXAMPLES

List:

The meeting included the Provost, her assistant, and the Associate Dean.

Rhodes College's lush, Gothic campus is appealing to prospective students.

Introductory phrase:

With the Lynx Lair renovation complete, students will enjoy a pub atmosphere.

Nonrestrictive clause:

The library, you will be amazed to hear, cost $40 million to build.

Independent clauses:

Rhodes is a top liberal arts college, and it consistently ranks in the first quartile of colleges nationwide.

~ IV. WRITING ETIQUETTE ~

Writing is a form of expression and communication and, as such, should follow certain community standards. Below are the rules of etiquette both for academic work and emails.

A. Papers

1. Final Draft

Papers should be handed in on time; contain correct and accurate citations; and include page numbers, a title, your name, a word count, and a pledge to the honor code. In addition, your paper should be typed using 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins. The paper should be proofread for grammar and contain complete sentences and paragraphs, and it should be scrutinized for accurate citation and paraphrasing.

2. Late Papers

If for some reason you are unable to hand in your paper on time, you should speak with your professor at least two days in advance of the deadline (never wait until the day/night before). Some professors are willing to give you an extension, depending on the circumstances, but some are not. If you are not granted an extension or simply turn in your paper late, accept any late penalty outlined in the course syllabus. Consider it your payment for taking more days than your classmates to complete the assignment.

3. Paper Grades

Sometimes a grade you receive on a paper isn't the grade you expected. Most professors are willing to discuss their comments and further explain the grade provided that you take some time to prepare your concerns and questions. Before meeting with your professor, take a day to read and consider his or her feedback, re-read your paper with that feedback in mind, and write down your concerns. Be sure that you can articulate exactly what you disagree with before you speak with

your professor. Never just walk in and say you don't like the grade.

4. Backup Copies

It is imperative that you keep both an extra hard copy and backup electronic file of every piece of writing you do for your courses. Professors hear all kinds of stories about lost papers and computer crashes, and none of these is any excuse for not turning in your work when it is due. The bottom line is this: it is *your responsibility* to print and submit your complete, final paper on time. If you save your work to the Student Community server, it will be automatically saved every week, making it much easier for you to retrieve an extra copy should you need one.

B. Emails

1. Appropriateness

Emailing is decidedly the most efficient and accessible mode of communication. Although professors sometimes prefer you to contact them via email with questions or information about the class or your own work, email is not usually the most appropriate forum to discuss lengthy concerns. If you miss class, for example, do not email the professor to ask what you've missed; instead, contact a classmate to get that information. Likewise, if you disagree with feedback or a grade on a paper or exam, make an appointment or stop by during the professor's office hours. Emailing in these circumstances appears lazy or suspect.

In cases where email *is* appropriate (i.e., if something is unclear on the syllabus or if you are traveling for the debate team and must miss class), be sure to compose your prose with the same care you would a writing assignment in the course: use correct spelling and punctuation, a formal and respectful tone, and concise language. Emails are excellent written records of your communication, and you should not delete them until the issue communicated in them is resolved.

2. Pitfalls

Remember that emails can be delayed, misunderstood, or even lost. Therefore, it is always wise to follow up with a call or visit in person. Also, remember that your professors typically receive more than 50 emails each day and so yours may go unnoticed; use the subject line to call attention to your content and keep the body of your email short and simple. Do not expect an immediate reply. Give your recipient a day or two to respond. If you haven't heard from him/her by then, consider calling or stopping by during your professor's office hours.

~ V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ~

A. Citation

1. American Psychological Association

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 6th Edition. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2009.

APA Online. **http://www.apastyle.org/**

Ohio State University APA Citation Guide. **http://library.osu.edu/find/resources/citation-examples/apa/**

2. Council of Science Editors

Huth, Edward. *Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers.* 6th Edition. Cambridge: UP, 1994.

Ohio State University CSE Citation Guide. **https://library.osu.edu/find/resources/citation-examples/cse/**

3. Chicago/Turabian

***The Chicago Manual of Style.* 16th Edition**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Turabian, Kate. ***A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.* 8th Edition**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style Online. **http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html**

American Anthropological Association
www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf

4. MLA

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.* 7th Edition. NY: MLA, 2009.

Modern Language Association. **https://style.mla.org/**

The OWL at Purdue: MLA Formatting and Style Guide.
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/

B. Grammar and Punctuation

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.* NY: Gotham, 2009.

Straus, Jane. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation.* 9th Edition. NY: Straus, 2007.

C. Online Writing Labs & Resources

Dartmouth College Online Writing Materials.
http://www.dartmouth.edu/writing-speech/learning/materials

Enhance My Writing. **www.enhancemywriting.com**

The OWL at Purdue: Online Writing Lab.
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

D. Plagiarism

Fox, Tom, Julia Johns and Sarah Keller. *Cite It Right: The SourceAid Guide to Citation, Research, and Avoiding Plagiarism.* Osterville, MA: SourceAid, 2007.

The Learning Center.
www.plagiarism.org/article/preventing-plagiarism-when-writing

The OWL at Purdue: Is It Plagiarism Yet?
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/

E. Writing Process

Bernstein, Theodore. *The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage.* NY: The Free Press, 1995.

Cook, Claire Kehrwald. *Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1985.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing without Teachers.* 2nd Edition. Oxford: UP, 1998.

Hacker, Diane and Barbara Fister. *A Writer's Reference and MLA Quick Reference Card.* 7th Edition. NY: Bedford St Martins, 2010.

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose.* 5th Edition. NY: Longman, 2006.

Ross-Larson, Bruce. *Edit Yourself: A Manual for Everyone Who Works With Words.* NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Strunk, William Jr, E.B. White, and Roger Angell. *The Elements of Style.* 4th Edition. MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. www.bartleby.com/141/

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well.* 30th Anniversary Edition. Harper Collins Press, 2006.

Appendix. Shorthand Symbols

Professors literally spend hours grading your papers and in the interest of time often use shorthand to convey their thoughts of your prose. Below is a list of common symbols and their meaning.

	delete
	weak or incorrect
	good idea, well-said
	reverse order, invert
	insert letter, word or punctuation
	new paragraph needed
	parallel structure problem
	confusing, unclear
	letter needs capitalization
	word choice
	wrong word
	spelling problem
	grammar problem
	punctuation problem
	subject-verb agreement problem
	antecedent (pronoun reference) problem
	sentence fragment
	italicize
	underline
	passive voice (change to active)
	footnote needed
	citation needed
	quote or use quotation marks
	too colloquial/casual
	awkward wording or usage

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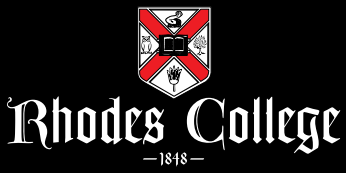

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