



Center for Writing and Speaking

A NO. 1 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Research Papers

1. Pick a topic.

What has interested you in the past or in class? What are controversial areas? What areas need to be considered further? Choose something that interests you and will allow you to cover new ground.

2. Find general sources.

Go to the library or the library's website. Find books or articles based on your topic. Pick keywords from your topic based on general headings, and look them up. Gather these general sources, and keep a bibliographic record of them. Keeping an organized record will make citing easier when you begin to write and help avoid accidental plagiarism. Read and take notes on what you discover.

3. Develop a working thesis and outline.

Based on what you have discovered, where is your research going? Look at themes and make connections. Form all of these notes into a working thesis (the more detailed the better). Form an outline of what you need to include in order to support your thesis. Incorporate the themes of your research into this outline. Be aware that in-depth research will alter your thesis and outline. Be flexible, but remember the important aspects of your outline so you don't lose focus.

4. Conduct in-depth research.

Now that you have a thesis and an outline, look back at the sources you already have, and use them to find other, more detailed sources. Think deeply about what you're trying to prove or demonstrate about your subject. Look for new sources at the library, in Galileo and other databases, and use the bibliographies from your general sources to prompt your search. Take detailed notes, and be careful to record which sources you used. Keep your working bibliography up to date.

5. Write.

Look over your outline, revise your thesis, and write a rough draft. Find the most efficient way to incorporate your research as you write. Don't count on adding research later; you might forget or run out of time. Cite as you write! This practice is the best way to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Keep your bibliography up to date.

6. Fill in any gaps.

When you have finished writing a rough draft, consider what areas you left out or did not sufficiently cover. Are there other points that use, help elaborate, or better support your thesis? Add research if you need to, or just add your own analysis.

7. Critique.

A research paper is often longer than other papers, but it needs just as much rewriting or even more. Compare your paper with your outline. Are your connections as clear in the paper as they were in your mind? Play with the format, move paragraphs — do whatever is necessary to make the paper more effective. Have a friend or a CWS tutor look over your draft.

8. Revise.

Now that you have a detailed paper, read it again. Finalize your bibliography. Check spelling, grammar, sentence variety — all of the things that will help make the paper successful.

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The Annotated Bibliography

Why use an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a useful tool for the reader and writer of a research paper. Perhaps your reader wants to know more about the subject of your paper but does not want to consult all of your sources, or one source contains information that you did not include in your paper but is still relevant to your topic.

What is an annotated bibliography and how is it written?

An annotated bibliography entry is written in the same format as a works cited entry, but also gives a brief summary of the information contained in the source and how helpful it was to your research. The summary is usually written in the present tense, and sentence fragments are permitted. The typical annotation is usually no more than three or four sentences. Annotated bibliographies allow you not only to cite your research but also to analyze it.

How is an annotated bibliography organized?

Usually sources are divided into categories—primary and secondary. A primary source is a first-hand account, such as: notes from field studies, eyewitness accounts, interviews, newspaper articles, journals, diaries, etc. They are always listed first. Secondary sources include a scholar's research on a particular topic or event, surveys, reviews, critiques, etc. They are written by people who are not directly involved with the event. The distinction between a primary and secondary source will depend on the nature of your paper. The entries are arranged in alphabetical order. The annotations can begin on the same line as the citation or the line below.

Example:

The following example is in MLA style. As always, consult other style books for modification to the style approved by your instructor.

Works Cited

Primary

Blanchard, William, ed. *Thoughts from the Gold Mines: Letters from miners during the California Gold Rush*. New York: New House Press, 1996.

An extensive collection of letters from men who worked in the mines in California during the Gold Rush. Contains insight into the hardship experienced by families separated by the Gold Rush.

Secondary

Jones, Timothy. *Eureka!: The Gold Rush in California*. Atlanta, Georgia: University Press, 1995.

Explores the historical factors that led to the Gold Rush. Also looks at the rise and rapid decay of big boom towns founded during this era.

For more information on writing an annotated bibliography, see *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed): 514, 517, 520; *The St. Martin's Handbook* (7th ed): 251-53; <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/AnnotatedBibliography.html>; <http://www.users.drew.edu/~sjamieso/AnnotatedBibliographies.htm>

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Writing Compare/Contrast Papers

Comparing and contrasting assignments are common in the academic world. Below, some tips, and a definition to help you write a great paper that analyzes similarities and differences between two or more concepts, works, or events.

1. **Prewriting.**

Visually note similarities/differences by creating charts and/or highlighting. For example,

- Two pieces by the same author. Can you find an evolution of ideas over the course of her career?
- Two approaches to the same subject. Why are the approaches different? Do the two authors differ in culture, age, or gender?

2. **Thesis.**

Identify reasons for similar or different ideas in order to develop a significant thesis. Avoid the following:

- “Text A and text B have many similarities but also have many differences.” This elementary sentence merely recognizes the existence of similarities and differences.
- “Text A states X while text B states Y.” This elementary sentence merely states what is similar or different.

Instead, concentrate on answering the “so what?”

- What do you learn by drawing the comparison/contrast?
- Mention the specific reasons why similarities and differences exist.

3. **Organization.**

- Use outlining to sort your points of comparison or contrast.
- Briefly summarize the texts themselves, emphasizing the grounds for comparison. Sometimes it helps to point out obvious similarities as a justification for writing about differences.

Following the introduction and brief summary, choose one of two available routes of organization:

- 1) Text-by-text (block method): discuss all of text A, then all of B. Text-by-text organization is often easy to control, but be careful that by separating your discussions of the two texts, you don't essentially write two adjoining, but separate, papers.
- 2) Point-by-point (alternating method): alternate between significant points about text A and analogous points about text B. Point-by-point organization is often more interesting and reader-friendly. But be careful when using this format that you don't bounce back and forth too often. Avoid this tendency

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during your outlining by grouping similar points together and addressing them in clusters in reference to one text at a time.

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Blog Writing

1. **Write for your reader, not for yourself.**

A blog is not a diary. Self disclosure and flowery writing alienate readers. Engage your audience by writing clearly and conversationally about topics that matter to people.

2. **Define a clear purpose for your blog.**

Choose a topic for your blog and stick to it. Each post should relate to your central theme. Healthy and cheap cooking, violence against women in the media, or experiences of American ex-patriots abroad will draw more readers than “Daily Thoughts of Jane.”

3. **Think visually.**

Break up your writing with images and links to other sites. Include at least one image per blog. Provide links to other Web sites as you write—don’t just clump them at the end of the entry. Finally, writing short paragraphs in block style will make your blog easier to read.

4. **Use keywords.**

Choose keywords that people will search for. Use these words frequently in your posts to make your blog pop up in search engines.

5. **Write strong, short headlines that capture your point.**

A headline should spark interest and accurately describe what your post is going to be about.

6. **Get to the point—and stay there.**

Establish your point in your first paragraph. Internet surfers are scanners. If they don’t find what they’re looking for in the first 50-100 words, they’ll move on. Similarly, straying too far from your point later in your post could maroon your audience.

7. **Keep it short and simple.**

Don’t linger—say what you want to say and remember that future posts can include ideas that don’t make it in.

8. **Use a clear, engaging writing style.**

Write conversationally and confidently—your blog should be easy to read. Use active verbs and write sentences on the shorter side (but still vary your sentence structure).

(continued on reverse)

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Blog Writing, Continued

9. Make yourself credible.

- Link to other Web sites, especially other blogs. Credit your sources by providing links to them.
- Write objectively about your opinions, using facts and studies to backup your points.
- Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation—proofreading is crucial even for conversational writing.
- Clean up your blog—delete posts that no longer seem well written or relevant.
- Don't use emoticons or common internet abbreviations such as “lol,” “brb,” “lmao,” etc.

10. **Get responses.**

Ask questions near the end of each post to elicit responses. Reply quickly to your comments, even ones you disagree with. Delete crude and deliberately offensive comments.

11. **Respect privacy.**

If you're blogging about someone other than yourself, use caution when disclosing the identities of people and organizations, especially those that generally try to maintain some anonymity. Always ask for permission to disclose names and other personal information.

12. **Have fun.**

A blog is a space where you can share your passions. Your interest in a subject will shine through your writing if you pick a topic you care about.

If you need more help with the structure of your blog go to the D-Center, where they can help with the specifics of creating a visually appealing and well working site!

<https://agnesscott.mywconline.net/>

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Writing Effective Position Papers

Position papers are demanding assignments that require you to take a stand on an issue or idea presented in a text. Although your opinion is important and forms the basis for your argument, it should not dominate the assignment. Position papers rely on critical evaluation that goes beyond a mere surface reading or a passionate personal reaction. Remember, if there's no other side to your argument . . . you don't have one.

Think in debate mode.

You have to choose a side and argue in favor of your point of view. A position paper should not restate the obvious facts about the text or topic; a strong position paper shows the author's ability to pick a side or take a stand. Whether you choose to write about a theme throughout a particular work, a specific scene that captures the essence of an entire text, or one side of an issue, remember to write definitively about your position.

Ineffective: Legislators continue to debate the extent to which government should be involved in the lives of individual citizens.

Effective: A responsible government must respect the rights of individuals and agree not to interfere with citizens' abilities to make sensible decisions for themselves.

The second point can easily be debated while the first states a well-known fact that is not open to individual interpretation.

Consider the opposing side

What would somebody say to challenge your stance? You must consider the other viewpoint and dismantle it in your paper, using enough details to show that you understand both sides. Remember, though, name calling has no place in position papers.

Ineffective: People who think otherwise are idiots and therefore their opinions don't count.

Such personal attacks can backfire and make you appear to have no valid reasons for holding different views.

Include evidence.

Although you are expressing your personal opinion, it must be upheld by references to specific details—supporting facts, arguments, quotations—in order to have any validity. You must be able to prove that your position is valid based on a thorough knowledge of the topic, text, or argument. Outside research may be required; look for other sources based on opinion as well as sources providing factual background information.

Use vivid verbs, concrete nouns.

In a position paper, avoid using the passive voice and words such as “maybe, perhaps, possibly, etc.” that weaken your argument. Phrases like “in my opinion” are also needless and sound apologetic instead of certain; if you're writing the paper, it's obviously your opinion.

Ineffective: It is possible that people support the idea of abortion because women should have the right to decide what to do with their bodies.

Effective: By threatening to pass anti-abortion laws, the government violates an essential right for all mankind: the right to choose.

(continued on reverse)

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Writing Effective Position Papers

Remember:

- Don't be afraid to be argumentative...that's the reason it's called a "position" paper.
- Look at all sides of the issue and base your position on a thorough examination of all the relevant evidence.
- Convince the reader that you have critically read the text or analyzed the issue.
- Express your thoughts clearly and concisely.

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Peer Editing

Peer editing is a way for students to help each other with writing. Each time you've asked a friend to look over your paper, and each time a friend has asked you to look over her paper, you've participated in peer editing. Here are some questions to ask when looking at a thesis-driven essay, the most common type of college writing assignment.

Does the paper fit the assignment?

No matter how good the paper is, if it's not the one assigned, your peer won't get a good grade. Find out what the instructor expects from this assignment; ask for clarification of any points you may not understand.

Does the paper have a clear, arguable thesis?

The thesis should go well beyond the obvious. It should make an argument that can be contested by reasonable people. It should also be located in the introductory paragraph.

Not a thesis: Shakespeare uses images of death in Macbeth. *Yes, but so what?*

Thesis: Through Macbeth's selfish grab for might, which sacrifices numerous innocent lives in the process, Shakespeare warns theatergoers of the dangers of individualism.

How well is the paper organized? Does it stay on track throughout or meander from thought to thought?

A paper that contains too many ideas unrelated to the thesis lacks focus. Each paragraph in a paper should be built around one main idea and should support the thesis. The writer does not need to explain everything there is to know about the subject; the paper should focus on the points that best support her argument.

Do the introduction and conclusion pack a punch?

The introduction's job is to tell the reader what to expect out of the paper. If you don't know what to expect after reading the introduction, it's not serving its purpose. Watch out for broad generalizations and dictionary definitions; both are overused in introductions. A good conclusion should tie the paper together without rehashing the main points or restating the introduction.

Does the writer over-use passive voice?

Passive voice allows a writer to create a sentence with a verb and an object but no subject, and it can be confusing for the reader. Active voice is more direct and preferable because it shows both the subject and what the subject's acting on, the object.

Passive: The king is murdered. *Who did it? Who knows? There's no subject.*

Active: Macbeth murders the king. *Who did it? Macbeth.*

(continued on reverse)

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Peer Editing, Continued

Are the words suited for an academic paper?

Slang is not always appropriate for an academic paper. Other words can be too general, such as “bad” or “good.” Some words may not convey the degree of professionalism students need to show in their writing. At the same time, papers shouldn’t be overloaded with big words that you have to look up; the student should use her own vocabulary.

Nonacademic: Lady Macbeth feels bad because she helped her husband kill the king.

Academic: Lady Macbeth is troubled by her assistance in the murder of the king.

Quick tips for peer editing:

1. Be respectful. Give the sort of helpful comments that you would like to receive.
2. Comment with questions, such as “Is this your thesis?” or “What exactly do you mean by this?”
3. Be specific about strengths and weaknesses. “Work on your transitions” is less clear than “What sentence connects your first and second paragraphs?” “I like this” is not as helpful as “This sentence shows me exactly what the main idea of this paragraph is.”
4. Remember, grammar isn’t everything. The main focus of a peer editing session is to see that the student has a clear, readable, and logical argument. Without one, no degree of grammatical sophistication will make a paper successful.
5. Write a list of comments or suggestions at the end of the paper in order of importance. If a student has a problem with subject-verb agreement but also doesn’t have a thesis, the thesis is the more important issue for her to address.
6. Approach each other as sailors in the same boat. You’re here to help each other, so relax!

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Writing Timed Essays

Unlike multiple choice questions or fill-in-the-blanks, an essay test also examines your critical thinking ability and your ability to communicate your ideas. Recognizing what challenges timed essays present and knowing how to be prepared can help you succeed at essay tests, especially like those required by the GRE.

Be prepared. Before taking the test, review your notes and quiz yourself on the information.

Connect ideas by asking questions:

- How does one idea (or fact, or detail) relate to another? Are these ideas similar? In what ways are they different? Does one idea grow out of another? Asking these questions can prepare you for a "compare and contrast" essay question.
- Are there any recurring themes or ideas? Are there any trends in the evolution or development of ideas? What would the next logical change in this movement be? These questions ask you to think about development, movements, and trends, and can prepare you for a question that asks you to describe a process or to speculate on the future of a topic.
- How do I feel about this topic? Which school of thought do I agree with and why? Are there flaws in an argument that I can expose based on my knowledge of the topic? Evaluating your opinion by asking these questions can help you prepare for an essay question that asks you to argue one side of a debate.

Think first — and fast. During the test, read the question before taking a few moments to collect your thoughts.

Here are some tips:

- Be sure your essay answers all of the questions in the prompt but not necessarily in the same order.
- Formulate a thoughtful, clear thesis. As in any other essay, the thesis is the key to your argument.
- Jot down the supporting evidence you want to include in the essay.
- Organize your points in an outline you can follow.

This first step should only take a few minutes. If you have a choice of questions, quickly decide which question you will answer and prepare to write it. If you are unsure, choose the question for which you know the most content or examples.

Write it. Following your outline, get your thoughts onto paper.

Some tips on writing:

- Aim for clear, concise language. Don't use overly descriptive or wordy sentences.
- Avoid words you don't know, even if they sound intelligent. The goal is to make sure readers will understand you.
- Relate every bit of support back to your thesis.
- Write neatly and legibly. Skip lines if it helps make your writing easier to read.

Revise it.

Save the last 7-10 minutes to read through your answers, making sure you didn't omit a word or use unclear phrasing. If a revision emergency occurs—i.e., you need to add three sentences to make yourself clear—write a new passage and refer your reader to it as you would with a footnote.

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Journal Writing

Journal entries should record your reaction to an assignment. Rather than summarizing the material or expressing an emotional opinion, they should evaluate the text, pose questions, connect to personal experiences, and transform the original work into a new way of thinking and writing about the topic at hand. While this five-step model should help to organize your ideas, it is only one approach to journal writing.

RECORD.

- Include notes and specific information from the reading. Provide the author's name and article title. Pull a quotation from the text or point to a particular part of the assignment. Tell the reader what your response is about. Be brief, and do not summarize.
- What are your goals for the journal entry? What topics are most interesting, provoking, or challenging to you?

EVALUATE.

- Discuss likes and dislikes, difficulties encountered through the reading, and opinions in response to the text. Assess the assignment as a reader.
- Were you attracted to a particular section of the article? Why? Did the author clearly explain his or her position, research, or theory? Do you agree with conclusions the author has made?

ASK.

- Raise questions about new or unique ideas and information. Question research methods and make hypotheses.
- What is still confusing or unclear in the reading? What would you like to know more about?

CONNECT.

- Make connections between the reading and your personal experiences, knowledge, background, current and previous studies, and current events. Does the writing resemble works you have read in this or other classes? Look for ways in which the text's subject parallels or connects to other academic areas.
- What examples or theories from the reading relate to your personal experiences in school, family, friendships, work, or other areas of life?

TRANSFORM.

- Reconstruct the data through drawings, charts, sketches, maps, graphs, or timelines. Make the text your own through unique ways of expression. Look at the reading through a new lens. Explore practical implications of new knowledge and propose further research topics.
- How is the text relevant to other facets of your life? How would you communicate this knowledge to others? Could a map, graph, or chart represent this information in a new way?

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Conducting an Interview

Conducting an interview can be both a challenging and rewarding experience. Here are some tips to assist you in making the most out of it!

Before the interview

- **Research, research, research!** Find out as much information as possible about your subject before the interview in order to get the richest perspective possible during the interview.
- **Brainstorm your goals for the interview.** Be specific about what you're trying to find out, then create a list of questions with these goals in mind. Think of creative ways to get the interviewee to "explain" or "describe" what it is you want to find out. Avoid questions that can simply be answered with a "yes" or "no." Instead, develop questions that are both open-ended and specific.
- **Use a voice recorder.** If you utilize a voice recorder, you can spend more time noting non-verbal responses, and less time scurrying to write down every word that has been said. By having an accurate account of both words and observations of body language, you will have a better representation of the interviewee.

During the interview

- **Be flexible.** Let your questions serve as a guide rather than a strict script.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** If you're trying to find out something specific, it's okay to probe until you find out what you need to know. Just remember to ask open-ended questions to get to the point!
- **Maintain eye contact.** Although you may want to take some notes during the interview, you do not want to be consumed in writing things down. Your focus should be on listening!
- **Pay attention to body language.** Often times, the *way* a person responds to a question is more insightful than the answer itself. Did they respond enthusiastically or reluctantly? Was the response immediate or delayed? Did their face brighten up when you asked a particular question, or did they cringe or flinch?

After the interview

- **Be sure to thank your interviewee for their time.** A thank you card or e-mail should suffice. Offer to share your finished product with them.
- **When in doubt, ask for clarity.** It's better to ask than to misrepresent the interviewee's opinions.
- **Be open to change.** You may feel like your original thoughts about the interviewee have changed. Work with that change! Don't be afraid to critically analyze your new perceptions.
- **Check the assignment.** Keep in mind what instructions you have for your assignment and arrange your information accordingly.

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Revising Prose

You've finally written that huge research paper or that feature story for the newspaper, so now you want to go through and make sure that everything from sentence order to word choice is perfect. Here are some things to keep in mind when revising prose.

Strong verbs.

Saying something powerfully proves much more effective than simply saying it. Replace as many “to be” verbs (it is, this is, she was, etc.) as possible with other more specific verbs, especially in introductory sentences.

Example: “Heathcliff exudes mystery,” not “Heathcliff is mysterious.”

Action, action, action.

Always read prose critically for the use of passive voice, where the object of an action is put in the position of the subject with the use of “was/were” and “by.” Active voice reduces wordiness and emphasizes key words.

Example: “The book was checked out by Ann” is less effective than “Ann checked out the book.”

Variety.

Do all your sentences follow the same form? Do they all begin in the same way? Vary your sentence lengths and word choices. If your paper repeats a certain word or phrase, search for other ways of conveying the same idea.

Less is more.

Long phrases and filler words that do not contribute to the overall meaning of your sentence should be kept to a minimum. Here are some specific things to avoid using in excess.

- Words that are redundant to argument (*truly, indeed, really, etc.*) or add nothing (*as it were, in other words, etc.*)
- Indirect beginning phrases (*it is important to note, we must consider, etc.*) or unnecessary connectors (*thus, however, etc.*)
- Phrases that can be replaced by one or two words (*in spite the fact that, the question as to whether, etc.*)

Creating emphasis.

You want your reader to easily recognize your strongest points of emphasis. Watch out for these mistakes:

- Sentences that merely list and noun-heavy sentences—verbs are the strongest words in a sentence, not nouns.
- Negatives—a point stated in the positive form is usually stronger.
- Clichés—overused phrases take away power because your audience is already familiar with them.

Fine-tuning.

Before you turn your paper in, read over it and evaluate each element of the writing. Is this word or phrase necessary? Could this idea be conveyed more expressively, or more directly? Does it flow with what comes before and after? Pay special attention to first and last sentences of paragraphs and first and last paragraphs of essays. Reading aloud is a great way to catch small errors and awkward wording in an essay you've read in your head ad nauseum.

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Reflections and Think Pieces

These assignments are short papers with an informal tone that show clear, critical, and independent thought about a text. More than just an emotional response, these papers should evaluate and question. All three types of assignments require the same steps— reading, thinking, and of course, writing.

Reading the text.

- Keep the assignment in mind. Does the assignment ask for a response to a specific issue within the text, or does it ask for a more general and open response targeting the text as a whole?
- Underline or mark passages that “speak” to you and write down ideas that are sparked by the text, so you won’t forget your immediate reactions. These ideas might lead to the topic of your think piece (and they might prove useful for class discussions).
- Note the smaller themes in the text as well as the larger ones. They may turn out to be pivotal to the direction of your paper.

Thinking about the text.

- How do you react to the text? Does anything strike you as particularly interesting, bothersome, worthy of further thought? Answering these questions will help you come up with ideas for topics.
- Where are the holes in the text? Does the author cover the topic thoroughly? What has the author left out that you feel is integral? Are there any questionable assumptions made by the author? These can be points to elaborate on during writing.
- What path do you want your reflections to take? After exploring your initial reaction, consider what direction to pursue. Short outlines, diagrams, or lists of ideas to cover can be useful at this point.

Writing about the text.

- Though your think piece need not follow a formal essay structure, organization and clarity are still important.
- Don’t merely summarize. Develop your own thoughts and reflections in connection to the text.
- Lead your reader somewhere beyond a simple observation; in other words, make a point or several points and examine them in depth.
- Use examples and quotations from the assigned text to support what you say and make the piece stronger and more convincing.
- Use the assignment to express more than how you “feel” about the text or problem. Whether you liked the text or not is usually relevant but should not be the central focus of your think piece.
- Make connections between the assigned text and the course content (lecture or discussion topics, other readings, films, guest lectures, student presentations). Show that you are thinking holistically.

Above all, explore your own ideas and thoughts about the assigned text; after all, that is the point of the assignment. Think pieces are designed to make you, the writer, think!

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Style Guide for Emails

Communication is about ninety percent body language, eight percent tone of voice, and two percent content. With email you can't rely on the first 98 percent—we can't depend on email readers to interpret our subtleties or tone either. It's best to spell it out, politely, especially if the readers are possible employers, professors or people you want to impress. Here are some tips.

Write a clear subject line.

It's the first thing people read. If you want to ask a question to a company about a job offer you saw in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, don't write "Question," or "Job Offer." Try to give as much information as you can, for example: "Inquiry about receptionist job ad in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution."

Use greetings and closings.

"Dear," "Sincerely," etc. If you are writing to someone you are not familiar with, use a title — Mr. or Ms.—unless you know of another title such as Dr. or Professor. If you do not know the gender or title of the recipient you can use their first and last name. If the person identifies as gender non-binary Mx. can be used as a title.

Use formal writing as a default.

With employers, teachers, or people in authority, you generally want to stick to a more formal writing style. To be safe, treat your emails like business letters you'd send through snail mail. Remember to use conventional English. Keep your message focused, but make sure to be polite. Say "Please" and "Thank you." Don't just ask for what you want and press "Send."

Make it easy to read.

Reading from a computer screen is a lot more difficult than reading from a sheet of paper. Use a short paragraph per idea, and insert blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, consider using bullets to make them easier to follow. Don't WRITE IN ALL CAPS, or all lower case, or use strings of exclamation marks!!!!!! Also, since your email will be one of the heap of emails people receive daily, keep it short.

Proofread!

Keep in mind that spell check doesn't catch everything. Be careful about your language —what may seem subtly humorous to you may seem insulting to others. Remember: tone is really difficult to convey through email. If you are trying to make a good first impression, read the message over several times to make sure the grammar and spelling are correct and that the message sounds appropriate. Once you hit the send button, you won't have another chance. Emails are often forwarded to many readers. You don't want to become infamous for your errors!

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Writing News Stories

Write about facts only.

Facts are what you observed or can ascertain from talking to participants. You should NOT be the subject or a part of this story. Do not use 'I'. A news story does not express opinion unless it is expressed in a quotation from someone who was there or is an expert.

Some research is usually necessary to complete the story.

Have there been accidents at this corner before? Does the driver of the car who ran the light have a record of traffic violations? What was the mayor's position on the issue last month? What political action groups have been taking sides in the controversy?

The people you quote should be as credible as possible.

Don't quote the five-year-old standing on the street corner who happened to see the accident unless that is somehow relevant to your story! Try to interview those who are experts on the subject.

Represent fairly the words and intentions of the people you interview.

You may clean up gross errors in language to spare your speakers ridicule, but you must maintain the exact meaning of the quotation. Use "she said," never "she averred" or other synonyms for "said."

Determine what is the news story and what is the background story, which comes later in the piece. For example, three days after the car crash in which Princess Diana was killed, the news story is the revelation that the chauffeur had a high blood alcohol level, the background story (*back-story*) is that the princess died in the crash.

Avoid loaded words that carry emotional emphasis or show opinion. Remember, we just want the facts.

Use clear, simple language and short paragraphs with one point per paragraph.

Don't guess. Find out what you can and don't mention things about which you have only vague information.

Follow the standard structure:

1. A *lead* sentence that encapsulates the most important information.
2. A *funnel structure* that lists the information in descending order of importance (the story will be cut by an editor from the bottom).
3. Include the *back-story* several paragraphs down from the lead - whatever happened before that will help us understand the latest news.
4. *No conclusion* necessary, though you may end with a twist or with a piece of information that suggests other directions for the story (keep in mind that it probably will be cut!).

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A NO. 14 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Writing Editorials

An editorial:

- is a statement of informed opinion. An editorial combines strong, clear opinion with in-depth knowledge of a subject—of all sides of a subject. Research is essential; opinion dominates in the finished piece, but opinion rests on solid, accurate information and broad knowledge.
- should case new light on a subject or emphasize new or newly important arguments in order to be convincing and powerful. As you choose the subject of your editorial, consider what fresh insights you may have to offer.
- need not represent an extreme side of an issue Middle-of-the-road or qualified positions are often the most interesting, but they must be clearly and precisely laid out for the reader and presented in convincing language that shows the writer’s confidence in her views.
- addresses a subject that is focused and well defined. “Education” is too broad a subject; you will make a better case if you look at one aspect of that broader subject such as “merit pay for teachers,” “school uniforms in DeKalb county elementary schools,” or “the value of statewide testing.”
- presents the strongest arguments in favor of the position taken, but it must also address some of the arguments on the other side in order to dismantle or refute them. If a writer leaves key counterarguments out of the piece, readers will find the editorial flimsy and easy to pick apart.
- usually builds to its strongest arguments, often following a structure similar to the one outlined below:
 - Introduction of the problem by the end of the first paragraph or beginning of the second;
 - Proposal of a solution or new way of thinking about the problem;
 - Statement of arguments in favor of position and refutation of key arguments against the position;
 - Arguments presented in ascending order of importance or strength;
 - Memorable last sentence or paragraph restating the main opinion in words that will echo in the reader’s mind.
- Should avoid charged language or fallacious arguments that not only weaken the case but also can distract readers or scare them away.

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A NO. 15 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Close Readings Across the Disciplines

What is a close reading?

A close reading offers a detailed examination of the language of a passage that allows both the author and her audience to better understand subtle nuances and shifts in meaning. The passages examined in a close reading should be your key to unlocking meaning in the entire text.

- **When should I use close readings?**

Always! Examining an author's words in detail adds subtlety to your work by making general arguments more precise and text-specific. A passage in the Constitution will benefit as much from a close reading as a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks.

- **How can I prepare for a close reading?**

Read with a pencil or pen in hand. Mark passages that seem particularly relevant to the argument of the work and quotations spark questions in your mind.

- **Select quotations** that will help you answer your question and support your thesis. Because you will be conducting a detailed analysis of the passages, you probably don't need or want too many.

How can I develop a close reading into an essay?

1. Find a logical arrangement for the quotations.
 - a. Which passages use similar language to talk about the same idea?
 - b. Which use different language, and why?
 - c. Is the author's tone different at the beginning of the text than at the end? If so, what caused the change and why is it important? This arrangement of quotations will be your outline for the paper.
2. Develop a thesis that explains the patterns that you see.
 - a. If there is a development, what is it? Why does it happen?
 - b. What does it mean in the broader context of the work? You should use the idea or image that you are focusing on as a key to explain the rest of the text.
3. As you write, carefully analyze the language of each quotation, explaining how that language proves your thesis.

How should I revise a close reading?

In a close reading, the greatest danger lies in becoming so immersed in the details of a specific passage that you forget to discuss the relationship of the details to the big picture, the text as a whole. As you revise, make sure that your analyses of individual passages relates back to a thesis that discusses not only the presence of an idea, link, or image, but also why the presence of those elements is important to the entire text.

(continued on reverse)

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Close Readings Across the Disciplines, Continued

Example 1: English

Text: Emily Dickinson

My cocoon tightens, colors tease
I'm feeling for the air;
A dim capacity for wings
Degrades the dress I wear.

Thesis: The butterfly imagery in Emily Dickinson's "My cocoon tightens" reflects the speaker's complex belief that, although the transformation is inevitable - caterpillars must become butterflies - she herself has spun the strands that entrap her. While undeniably feminist, this perspective offers a subtle rebuke to women who complain of confinement without examining the causes.

Sample close reading: The first stanza of the poem establishes the speaker's agency. Though the cocoon "tightens," there is no agent behind the tightening - it is a natural indication that the butterfly is nearly ready to emerge. The possessive pronoun in front of "cocoon" reinforces the woman's power - she herself has woven the cocoon that tightens around her. The word "degrades" in the fourth line of the stanza contrasts the woman's present state with her potential: the poem condemns women's adherence to traditional roles, symbolized by the constrictive clothing. The woman herself, however, has chosen the binding cocoon and must free herself.

Example 2: Political Science

Text: The Declaration of Independence

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Thesis: The authors of the "Declaration of Independence" wished to make the separation of the colonies from the mother country seem as logical and unrevolutionary as possible. The language of the document supports this claim, using natural and scientific imagery to describe the separation between the two political entities.

Sample close reading: The introduction to the Declaration makes multiple references to nature and natural processes, indicating that nature, not incendiary men, is responsible for the division. The word "dissolve" in the first line establishes this tone, evoking the image of the ocean's water slowly and inevitably wearing away the bond. Building upon this imagery, it is "Nature" and "Nature's God," not the men themselves, who demand equality. By establishing their lack of culpability at the beginning of the document, the writers create the possibility for bolder claims later in the Declaration.

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A NO. 16 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Sample Persuasive Speech Outline

Professor's Name
Persuasive (Policy) Speech Outline—First Draft
19 November 2018

I. INTRO

- A. Attention-getter:** After observing first-hand mountaintop removal in West Virginia, Robert Kennedy, Jr. stated, “King Coal” is now accomplishing what the glaciers could not—obliterating the hemisphere’s oldest, most biologically dense and diverse forests.”
- B. Thesis:** Mountaintop removal (MTR) is one of the most devastating environmental issues facing the U.S. today, with significant health and environmental risks.
- C. Motivation:** While you may feel somewhat removed from MTR, its contribution to our energy supply is as close as the light switch on the wall.
- D. Preview:** I begin with a survey of MTR and its health and environmental risks, then, some major reasons for the persistence of MTR, and, finally, a policy proposal that will mitigate the tremendous damage resulting from MTR.

II. BODY

- A.** Mountaintop removal poses devastating health and environmental risks in Appalachia.
1. Mountaintop removal has destroyed vast amounts of the Appalachia.
 - a) Over 470 mountains leveled since the 1980s (Boston Globe)
 - b) By 2012, over 820,000 acres will be destroyed by MTR (Washington Post)
 2. MTR ravages the environment and threatens human health.
 - a) MTR devastates fresh water streams
 - (1) Over 1200 miles of streams already severely damaged (John McQuaid)
 - (2) Significant elevations of selenium downstream from valley fills (EPA environmental impact study, 2003)
 - b) MTR destroys ancient forests
 - (1) The EPA estimates that by 2013 a forested area the size of the state of Delaware will have been destroyed by MTR (EPA impact study, 2003)
 - c) MTR threatens the health and lives of those living near coal production.

(page 1 of 4, continued on reverse)

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Sample Persuasive Speech Outline (page 2 of 4)

- (1) Residents near heavy coal production have higher risk for cardiopulmonary disease, chronic lung disease, and kidney disease (American Journal of Public Health, 2008)
- (2) Hospitalization for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and hypertension are significantly higher for residents near heavy coal production (Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health, 2007).
- (3) In 1972, sludge impoundment failed in Logan County, West Virginia, which killed 125 people and destroyed thousands of homes (Kari Lydersen, The Progressive)
- (4) Approximately 450,000 West Virginians are without drinkable water (Julia Fox, Organization & Environment)

B. Several factors perpetuate the MTR plague on Appalachia.

1. MTR satisfies America's demand for cheap energy.

- a) In the past 20 years, the U.S. demand for electricity has increased 70% (Julia Fox)
- b) Coal provides fuel for 52% of America's electricity (Washington Post, 2006)

2. Environmental protections were weakened significantly and unenforced during the Bush administration.

- a) In 2007, the Interior Department, pending EPA approval, did away with regulations that ban dumping mine waste within 100 feet of a stream (John McQuaid, The Smithsonian, 2009)
- b) One EPA official working during the Bush administration told the NY Times that EPA workers "were told to take our clean water and clean air cases, put them in a box, and lock it shut." (NY Times, Charles Duhigg, 13. Sept. 2009)
- c) State officials in West Virginia cited more than 4200 water pollution violations since 2000 (NY Times, Duhigg)
- d) In December 2008, the last hour before Bush left office, the EPA passed a ruling that did away with a 25-year tradition to regulate the dumping of coal mining waste into waterways (Biggers, Salon, 29 Jan. 2009)

C. Congress should strengthen the Clean Water Act

1. Strengthening the Clean Water Act for MTR requires three provisions



Sample Persuasive Speech Outline (page 3 of 4)

- a) Create a 2000-foot buffer zone between freshwater streams and coal waste
 - b) Limit the size of all valley fills to 35 acres
 - c) All permits for MTR shall be issued by the EPA under the Clean Water Act
- D.** The proposed legislation will reduce health risks and the environmental impact of MTR.
- 1. 2000-foot buffer zone will reduce health risks.
 - a) Currently, mine waste, including the toxic chemical selenium, finds its way into freshwater streams because the lack of a reasonable buffer zone.
 - b) Expanding the buffer zone to 2000 feet (approx. 4/10 of a mile) reduces the risk of harmful chemicals entering fresh-water streams.
 - 2. Limiting the size of valley fills to 35 acres will reduce environmental harm.
 - a) An EPA environmental impact study found that a 35-acre limit “would result in the fewest environmental impacts on streams, forested areas, and species” (Earthjustice)
 - b) Limiting the size of valley fills will also reduce the size of MTR, which results in less deforestation and less likelihood of flooding.
 - 3. Making the EPA the sole agency for issuing MTR permits will reduce health and environmental harms.
 - a) Currently, permits for MTR may be issued by the Army Corps of Engineers, which has failed miserably in protecting the environment.
 - b) The Corps itself stated that “it probably shouldn’t be overseeing such permits because the dump contained polluting chemicals regulated by the EPA (John McQuaid, *The Smithsonian*, 2009)
 - c) In 2007, in a case pitting environmentalists against Massey Energy, a judge found that the Corps “failed to take a hard look at the destruction of the headwater streams” in West Virginia (McQuaid, 2009).
 - d) Making the EPA responsible for issuing MTR permits will end the “Nationwide 21” permit process. The “Nationwide 21” permit authorizes discharge of mountaintop mining debris into valleys and streams with virtually no environmental oversight if the Corps has determined that only minimal damage will result.



Sample Persuasive Speech Outline (page 4 of 4)

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Summary:** MTR brings significant risks damage to public health and the environment. Implementing a 2000-foot buffer zone, 35-acre limit on valley fills and placing the permit process solely in the hands of the EPA will greatly minimize the risks associated with MTR.
- B. Call to Action:** I've drafted a letter advocating the three changes in the Clean Water Act outlined above. I would like you to take three copies of the letter and send them to your U.S. representative and two state senators. All you need to do is fill in their name and sign the letter.
- C. Closure:** As Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. states, it is time we stop "obliterating the hemisphere's oldest, most biologically dense and diverse forests."



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A NO. 17 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

Comparison of Two Persuasive Formats

This comparison can be helpful in the following ways:

1. As a learning device. It may be easier for you to understand Monroe's Motivated Sequence (a persuasive outline) by comparing it with the traditional outline (used for your informative speeches).
2. As an alternative outline choice for your persuasive speech. It is important to note that whichever of the two outline formats for Monroe's Motivated Sequence you select, the approach is the same; that is, first you describe the problem, then you present the solution.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence

ATTENTION

- I. Attention-getting statement
- II. Establish credibility
- III. Audience predispositions/Survey

NEED

- I. Need (state the problem)
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence

SATISFACTION

- II. (State the solution)
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence

VISUALIZATION

- III. (Solution benefits)
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence/Example

Conclusion

Summary (review main points)
Clincher (Restate proposition)

Statement of Reasons

INTRODUCTION

- I. Attention-getting statement
- II. Establish credibility; Audience predispositions/Survey* (Need for listening)
- III. State proposition (Thesis)
 - A. Preview main point I
 - B. Preview main point II
 - C. Preview main point III

BODY

- I. Main point
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
- II. Main Point
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
- III. Main Point
 - A. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence
 - B. Explanation/Example
 1. Evidence
 2. Evidence etc.

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A NO. 18 IN THE CENTER FOR WRITING AND SPEAKING HANDOUT SERIES

How to Introduce a Speaker

The purpose of an introductory speech is to let the audience know who the speaker is and to create credibility for the speaker and excitement for the topic at hand.

Be Brief:

When you introduce a speaker, give your audience the necessary information, get your audience excited, and then leave them wanting more. A good rule of thumb is to speak about a minute.

Give Background:

First, evaluate the audience. If your audience knows the speaker relatively well, then only the major highlights of their career are necessary. If the speaker is someone the audience is less knowledgeable on, you may need to give more information on the speaker, especially as it pertains to the subject they will be speaking on. Be sure to pronounce the speaker's name correctly, and make sure that all of your facts are correct.

Create Excitement:

Give the speaker enough 'build up'. If you are excited about the speaker, then your audience will be also. Do you have a related anecdote about the speaker? Is there an especially interesting fact about them? Keeping in mind the time limit, look for ways to build your audience's interest.

End with a bang:

Finishing your speech with an introductory statement allows the speaker to know when it is his or her turn to come up front while creating a smooth transition for your audience.

Examples: "Please join me in welcoming..."
"I am very pleased to introduce..."
"Everyone, I present to you..."

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