

Writing: A First Look

Writing: A First Look

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- 1 Establish the purpose for your writing.
- 2 Determine the audience for your writing.
- 3 Identify the qualities of good writing.
- 4 Employ techniques to think critically about your writing.
- 5 Apply writing techniques for multimedia.
- 6 Write ethically and avoid plagiarism.

Visit [MyWritingLab](#) to complete the writing assignments in this chapter and for more resources on writing.

Why write? Aren't texting, e-mail, voice mail, and cellular phones dooming ordinary writing? Not long ago, some people thought and said so, but events haven't supported those predictions. In fact, much electronic media, such as blogging and tweeting, have increased the amount of writing people do. Although devices such as cell phones have made some writing unnecessary, the written word still flourishes both on campus and in the world of work.

Writing offers very real advantages to both writers and readers:

- It gives writers time to reflect on and research what they want to communicate and then lets them shape and reshape the material to their satisfaction.
- It makes communication more precise and effective.
- It provides a permanent record of thoughts, actions, and decisions.
- It saves the reader's time; we absorb information more swiftly when we read it than when we hear it.

What kind of writing will people expect you to do?

- At college you may be asked to write lab reports, project proposals, research papers, essay exams, or marketing plans.
- Job hunting requires application letters.
- On the job, you might describe the advantages of new computer equipment, report on a conference you attend, explain a new procedure, suggest a new security system, or present a marketing plan.

- Personally, you may need to defend a medical reimbursement, request a refund for a faulty product, or find a solution to a personal problem.

Here is the raw truth: the ability to write will help you earn better grades, land the job you want, and advance in your career. Writing will help you create the future you want in a competitive world.

When we write, it is often in response to a situation that shapes the purpose and audience of our writing. We rarely write in isolation, but instead write to others who have an interest in our message.

The Purposes of Writing

Whenever you write, some clear purpose should guide your efforts. If you don't know why you're writing, neither will your reader. Fulfilling an assignment doesn't qualify as a real writing purpose. Faced with a close deadline for a research paper or report, you may tell yourself, "I'm doing this because I have to." An authentic purpose requires you to answer this question: What do I want this piece of writing to do for both my reader and me?

Purpose, as you might expect, grows out of the writing situation. You explore the consequences of the greenhouse effect in a report for your science instructor. You write an editorial for the college newspaper to air your frustration over inadequate campus parking. You propose that your organization replace an outdated piece of equipment with a state-of-the-art model.

Following are four common *general writing purposes*, two or more of which often join forces in a single piece:

To Inform We all have our areas of expertise and often share that information with each other. A student in computer science could post a blog on a class instructional site on how to create a Web page. A medical researcher shares her research in her publications with other doctors and other research professionals.

To Persuade You probably have strong views on many issues, and these feelings may sometimes impel you to try swaying your reader. In a letter to the editor, you might attack a proposal to establish a nearby chemical waste dump. Or, alarmed by a sharp jump in state unemployment, you might write to your state senator and argue for a new job-training program.

To Express Yourself When you text a friend, you choose words and phrases to show off who you are. By your topic, word choice, example, or turn of phrase, you display a bit of yourself whether in e-mails, journals, poetry, essays, or fiction.

To Entertain Some writing merely entertains; some writing couples entertainment with a more serious purpose. A lighthearted approach can help your reader absorb dull or difficult material.

1

Establish the purpose for your writing.

More Specific Purposes

Besides having one or more *general purposes*, each writing project has its own *specific purpose*. Consider the difference in the papers you could write about solar homes. You might explain how readers could build one, argue that readers should buy one, express the advantages of solar homes to urge Congress to enact a tax credit for them, or satirize the solar home craze so that readers might reevaluate their plans to buy one.

Having a specific purpose assists you at every stage of the writing process. It helps you define your audience; select the details, language, and approach that best suit their needs; and avoid going off in directions that won't interest them. The following example from the Internet has a clear and specific purpose.

Turn Down Your iPod Volume (or Go Deaf)

Marianne Halavage

1 I have had a Walkman, CD Walkman or iPod surgically attached to my ears via headphones since about the age of about five (anatomically strange. But true).

2 So chances are that I'm a case in point for the recent LA Times article. It says that one in every five teens has at least a slight hearing loss. Many experts think the culprit is the use of headphones to listen to portable music.

3 LA Times said:

Most teens think they are invulnerable and for most of them, the hearing loss is not readily perceptible so they are not aware of the damage. But the bottom line is, "Once there, the damage is irreversible," said Dr. Gary C. Curhan of Brigham and Women's Hospital.

4 Irreversible, you HEAR him. Gone. NEVER to return.

5 The idea of losing my hearing, even a little bit, terrifies me. Struggling to hear my music: my first love, my passion and my therapist; unable to hear my family and friends. I don't even want to think about it.

6 But for my hearing's sake in the future, I will. I'm 28, long out of teenie-dom, so no doubt some damage has been done. But I will, from now on, keep the volume on my iPod at an ear-friendly level, as the experts advise:

"The message is, we've got to stop what we are doing," said Dr. Tommie Robinson Jr., president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Assn. "We have to step back and say: OK, turn down the volume on iPods and earbuds and MP3 players. Wear ear protection at rock concerts or when you are exposed to loud noises for long periods of time," like when using a lawn mower.

7 Um, not so sure that many teens will take to wearing ear protection at concerts. They'd probably rather lose their hearing than have their pals laugh at them for looking a bit naff in it.

8 But, no ear protection now, hearing aid later...

9 Suddenly ear protection never sounded so good.

To grab her reader in a busy Internet environment, Marianne Halavage announces her purpose boldly in her title. The remainder of the paragraphs provide, alternately, statements by authority arguing that listening to loud music is likely to result in hearing loss with her own personal reaction where she identifies with her audience. The last two single-sentence paragraphs provide the reader with a stark choice and reaffirm the essay's purpose.

Now examine this paragraph, which does *not* have a specific purpose:

Imagine people so glued to their computers that they forget to eat or sleep and even miss work. It is like a strange version of a zombie movie. What could have eaten their brains? Video games can be addictive as players struggle to get to the next level. Still, this negative effect is exaggerated. But there are a number of qualities that make a video game player want to keep coming back to the game and any good game designer needs to know those qualities.

Is the paper for game addicts to get them to quit, a humorous analogy, or a serious recommendation to game designers? Once the writer decides on a purpose, the paragraph can be focused.

The stereotype of gamers is that they are so glued to their computers that they forget to eat, sleep, or work. While this is a gross exaggeration, game designers do want their players to be hooked on their games. There are in fact a number of qualities that make video players want to keep returning to a favorite game, and any good game designer needs to know those qualities.

The Audience for Your Writing

Everything you write is aimed at some audience—a person or group you want to reach. The ultimate purpose of all writing is to have an effect on a reader (even if that reader is you), and therefore purpose and audience are closely linked. You would write differently about your college experience to a young relative, your best friend, your parents, your advisor, or a future employer.

2

Determine the audience for your writing.

- School is fun and I am learning a lot—to a young relative to reassure
- I went to the greatest party—to your best friend to entertain
- I am working hard—to your parents to persuade them to send extra support
- I have learned many things that will help me contribute to your company—to an employer to persuade him or her to consider you for a job

It is important to recognize that writing, even texting, is very different from face-to-face conversations.

Writing: A First Look

Face-to-Face

You can observe body language and vary what you are saying in response.
You can respond to immediate questions.

There is little record of what you say.

Writing

You don't get to see how people are responding.
It would be hard for people to get questions to you.
Readers can reread your text.

Once written work has left your hands, it's on its own. You can't call it back to clear up a misunderstanding or adjust your tone. What this means is that as a writer, you need to be able to anticipate your readers' needs and responses.

Establishing rapport with your audience is easy when you're writing for your friends or someone else you know a great deal about. You can then judge the likely response to what you say. Often, though, you'll be writing for people you know only casually or not at all: employers, customers, fellow citizens, and the like. In such situations, you'll need to assess your audience before starting to write and/or later in the writing process.

A good way to size up your readers is to develop an audience profile. This profile will emerge gradually as you answer the following questions:

1. What are the educational level, age, social class, and economic status of the audience I want to reach?
2. Why will this audience read my writing? To gain information? Learn my views on a controversial issue? Enjoy my creative flair? Be entertained?
3. What attitudes, needs, and expectations do they have?
4. How are they likely to respond to what I say? Can I expect them to be neutral? Opposed? Friendly?
5. How much do they know about my topic? (Your answer here will help you gauge whether you're saying too little or too much.)
6. What kind of language will communicate with them most effectively?

College writing assignments sometimes ask you to envision a reader who is intelligent but lacking specialized knowledge, receptive but unwilling to put up with boring or trite material. Or perhaps you'll be assigned, or choose, to write for a certain age group or readers with particular interests. At other times, you'll be asked to write for a specialized audience—one with some expertise in your topic. This difference will affect what you say to each audience and how you say it.

The Effect of Audience on Your Writing

Let's see how audience can shape a paper. Suppose you are explaining how to take a certain type of X-ray.

If your audience is a group of lay readers who have never had an X-ray, you might

- Avoid technical language.
- Compare an X-ray to a photograph.
- Explain the basic process, including the positioning of patient and equipment.
- Comment on the safety and reliability of the procedure.
- Indicate how much time it would take.

If, however, you were writing for radiology students, you might

- Consistently use the technical language appropriate for this audience.
- Emphasize exposure factors, film size, and required view.
- Provide a detailed explanation of the procedure, including how to position patients for different kinds of X-rays.
- Address your readers as colleagues who want precise information.

Audience shapes all types of writing in a similar fashion, even your personal writing. Assume you've recently become engaged, and to share your news you write two e-mails: one to your minister or rabbi and the other to your best friend back home. You can imagine the differences in details, language, and general tone of each e-mail. Further, think how inappropriate it would be if you accidentally sent the e-mail intended for one to the other. Without doubt, different readers call for different approaches.

Discourse Communities

Professionals often write as members of specific communities. For example, biologists with similar interests often exchange information about their research. The members of a community share goals, values, concerns, background information, and expectations, and this fact in turn affects how they write. Because such writing is closely tied to the interests of the community, professional articles often start with a section linking their content to previous research projects and articles. Often custom dictates what information must be included, the pattern of organization, and the style the paper should follow. Throughout college, you will discover that part of learning to write is becoming familiar with the values and customs of different discourse communities. To do this, you'll need to read carefully in your major field, acquainting yourself with its current issues and concerns and learning how to write about them. As you start reading in any professional area, ask yourself these questions:

1. What are the major concerns and questions in this field?
2. What seems to be common knowledge?
3. To what works do writers regularly refer?
4. How do those in the field go about answering questions?
5. What methods do they follow?
6. Which kinds of knowledge are acceptable? Which are not?
7. What values seem to guide the field?

Writing: A First Look

8. What kinds of information must writers include in papers?
9. How are different writing projects organized?
10. What conventions do writers follow?

We all, of course, belong to many different communities. Furthermore, a community can involve competing groups, conflicting values, differing kinds of writing projects, and varying approaches to writing. But as part of your growth as a writer and professional, you'll need to understand the goals and rules of any community you enter.

Writing Assignment

Interview faculty in a career area or field you hope to enter. Ask them the ten questions above and write a short paper or a blog summarizing the results of your interview.

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE *The following two excerpts deal with the same subject—nanotechnology—but each explanation is geared to a different audience. Read the passages carefully; then answer the following questions:*

1. What audience does each author address? How do you know?
 2. Identify ways in which each author appeals to a specific audience.
- A. Nanotechnology is the creation of functional materials, devices and systems through control of matter on the nanometer length scale (1–100 nanometers) and exploitation of novel phenomena and properties (physical, chemical, biological, mechanical, electrical ...) at that length scale. For comparison, 10 nanometers is 1,000 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. A scientific and technical revolution has just begun based upon the ability to systematically organize and manipulate matter at nanoscale. Payoff is anticipated within the next 10–15 years.
- CNT Center for Nanotechnology
- B. Today's manufacturing methods are very crude at the molecular level. Casting, grinding milling and even lithography move atoms in great thundering statistical herds.
- It's like trying to make things out of LEGO blocks with boxing gloves on your hands. Yes, you can push the LEGO blocks into great heaps and pile them up, but you can't really snap them together the way you'd like.
- In the future, nanotechnology (more specifically, *molecular nanotechnology* or MNT) will let us take off the boxing gloves. We'll be able to snap together the fundamental building blocks of nature easily, inexpensively, and in most of the ways permitted by the laws of nature. This will let us continue the revolution in computer hardware to its ultimate limits: molecular computers made from molecular logic gates connected by molecular wires. This new pollution free manufacturing technology will also let us inexpensively fabricate a cornucopia of new products that are remarkably light, strong, smart, and durable.

Dr. Ralph Merkle, *Nanotechnology*

Just as you would not dial a telephone number at random and then expect to carry on a meaningful conversation, so you should not expect to communicate effectively without a specific audience in mind.

One other note: As you shape your paper, it is important that the writing please you as well as your audience—that is, satisfy your sense of what good writing is and what the writing task requires. You are, after all, your own first reader.

The Qualities of Good Writing

Good writing is essential if you want your ideas to be taken seriously. Just as you would have trouble listening to someone with his shirt on backward and wearing two different kinds of shoes, most readers dismiss out of hand writing that is disorganized, poorly worded, or marred by errors in grammar and spelling. In a world where most people are drowning under an information overload, few have the time or inclination to hunt through bad writing to search for quality ideas. Employers discard job seekers with poorly worded cover letters; badly written proposals are rejected; and few bother to read poorly written articles.

Three qualities—fresh thinking, a sense of style including the use of correct grammar and punctuations, and effective organization—help to ensure that a piece of prose will meet your reader’s expectations.

Fresh Thinking You don’t have to astound your readers with something never before discussed in print. Unique ideas and information are rare. You can, however, freshen your writing by exploring personal insights and perceptions. Think about the role of general education. One student who works on cars for fun might consider the way education functions as a toolbox, while another student who is interested in change might consider the way students are transformed by education. Keep the expression of your ideas credible, however; far-fetched notions spawn skepticism.

Sense of Style Readers don’t expect you to display the stylistic flair of Maya Angelou. Indeed, such writing would impair the neutral tone needed in certain kinds of writing, such as technical reports and legal documents. Readers do, however, expect you to write in a clear style. And if you strengthen it with vivid, forceful words, readers will absorb your points with even greater interest. Readers also expect you to use standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Effective Organization All writing should be organized so it is easy to follow. A paper should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, that is, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction sparks interest and acquaints the

3

Identify the qualities of good writing.

reader with what is to come. The body delivers the main message and exhibits a clear connection between ideas so that the reader can easily follow your thoughts. The conclusion ends the discussion so the reader feels satisfied rather than suddenly cut off. Overall, your paper should follow a pattern that is suited to its content and will guide the reader.

Freshness, style, and organization are weighted differently in different kinds of writing. For example, a writer who drafts a proposal to pave a city's streets will probably attach less importance to fresh thinking than to clear writing and careful organization. On the other hand, fresh thinking can be very important in a description of an autumn forest scene.

4

Employ techniques to think critically about your writing.

Writing and Critical Thinking

Good writing is connected to effective critical thinking. The more effectively a writer thinks about a topic or issue, the more likely it is that what he or she has to say will be worthwhile and credible. Writing the first thing that comes to mind can be a good way to get ideas, but it doesn't guarantee that the ideas are good ones.

What is "critical thinking"? That's really a tough question that could be a paper topic. Much of your college experience will help you think critically. Here are a few strategies you can use:

- **Question assumptions and claims fiercely** "Why do you think that?" and "How do you know that is true?" are good questions. There is much we take for granted. Do we know that electric cars or hybrids are more environment-friendly than gas-powered cars? Does or doesn't an increase in the minimum wage cost jobs?
- **Test the evidence ruthlessly** The evidence once seemed to suggest that the sun revolved around the earth. We see that the sun moves and the earth certainly feels stable beneath our feet. Someone (Copernicus) was bright enough to test the evidence and look at other evidence. He proved that, contrary to common sense, it is the earth that revolves around the sun, which makes it seem that the sun moves.
- **Imagine alternatives and be fearlessly ready to think differently** The Copernicus story is an example of someone imagining an alternative to the common point of view. Today we might imagine alternatives for higher education. What, some might ask, would happen if instead of earning degrees, students earned knowledge and skill badges (for example, one in writing competency) that they could take to an employer? Could higher education be porous and online with students/employees acquiring the skills and knowledge they need when they need it, instead of a sequence of courses over a four-year period?

Writing: A First Look

- **Narratives** How are narratives constructed, and how could they be told differently from different points of view? Consider how a parent and teen might tell the tale of the same violation of a curfew.
- **Description** How could something be described differently or from a different vantage point? A delicious meal could be described as “oozing” and “squishy” in ways that would make the food seem disgusting.
- **Process** How else could something be done or are there other ways for something to happen? If you outline your steps for studying, consider how someone else might outline a very different process for studying.
- **Illustration** We make a point through examples. What happens if we turn to other examples? Examples that focus on struggling students can be used to make the case that college courses are difficult. But surely there are examples of students who find only some parts of their coursework difficult and even examples of students who find their coursework easy.
- **Classification** To learn how we classify is to learn how we could classify things differently. We can ask how things are classified and experiment with alternative classifications. Thinking of colleges, we often think of administrators, teachers, and students. What if we classified instead by the degree of involvement in campus life: very involved, somewhat involved, and minimally involved?
- **Comparison** Often things look as they do based on comparison. How would they look different if we change the comparison? Football may look like a violent sport in comparison to baseball. How does it look when compared to rugby or hockey?
- **Cause and Effect** Can we consider other causes or effects beyond those that immediately come to mind? Often a new president or governor sees improvements in the economy during the first six months of his or her term. Some give these politicians credit for the improvement, but their policies may not have even been put into effect. What really caused the improvement?
- **Definition** In what other ways can we define something? How we define things shapes how we think about them. What, after all, is a “family”? At one time, we might have assumed that a family is a biological unit of father and mother with their biological children. Now there are many more definitions of family and much dispute about the term, as there is about terms like “marriage.” Critical thinking requires thinking about how concepts are defined and alternate ways of defining them.
- **Argumentation** What reasons and evidence can be used logically and effectively to support a claim and how?

As you work to develop each strategy, consider how the strategy offers ways for you to think critically about ideas and the world.

5

Apply writing techniques for multimedia.

Writing in a Multimedia World

At college and on the job, you will e-mail, text message, tweet, blog, and write text for Web pages. The processes and principles in this text apply to any media for which you may write. Regardless of the media, you need to employ effective writing processes, consider your purpose and audience, and employ effective organizational strategies. If you are texting your boss to let him know why you will be late to work, you know you will have to be polite and clear about the reasons you are delayed. Clearly, “Dude, traffic-jam,” won’t do. If you are creating a Web site that presents your restaurant, you are likely to write a description of the restaurant, revising the text several times to make it as effective as possible. If you are writing a blog on your favorite rock group, you might identify what has caused them to be successful or compare them with other groups. Throughout college, instructors may encourage you to use other media to complete assignments. Almost every career will expect you to know a wide range of communication media. What follows are a few points you might consider.

E-mail While in college, you will e-mail faculty and advisors. E-mail has the advantage of giving both you and your reader a written record of the exchange. If you ask a faculty member for permission to vary an assignment, it might be better to ask using an e-mail. A conversation will soon fade from each of your memories. However, an e-mail provides you with a written record of your request and, hopefully, the permission you received.

Though e-mail is often informal, you should still follow good writing practices when writing e-mail. The following e-mail to a professor is clearly too informal and incomplete. It also establishes the wrong tone.

Prof,

Sorry missed class. Car trouble. I’ll turn my paper in Monday when I see ya, OK.

Thanks tons.

Who is writing the message? Was the car trouble sufficient for an extension on the paper? Is the person simply using the car trouble to stall for extra time? Why didn’t she jump the car or get a ride to campus? The informal tone makes it seem that the student does not take the class or the professor seriously.

A more formal communication sensitive to the situation and the audience would be much better.

Professor von der Osten

I am very sorry I missed class today. I live in Cadillac, an hour’s drive from campus; unfortunately, this morning my car would not start because

Writing: A First Look

the distributor is broken. This is my first absence, and I notice from the syllabus we are allowed five unexcused absences. If you wish, I can bring in the estimate from the garage. I have e-mailed Tim Sullivan for notes from today's class.

Attached you will find a copy of the paper due today, Friday, September 25. Thank you for allowing us to submit our papers electronically in case of an emergency. I will also bring in a hard copy on Monday in case that would assist you.

I look forward to seeing you in class on Monday.

Susan Miller

ENGL 150: 9:00 A.M.

This more complete e-mail recognizes the formality of the situation, uses an appropriate form of address, provides a clearer explanation, indicates a serious attitude about the work in question, takes clear steps to meet the demands of the situation, and clearly identifies the writer in a way that recognized the reader may have many classes and students.

Your e-mail, like all writing, should be appropriate to the situation and the audience. An e-mail in response to a formal situation or to an important audience should be appropriately formal and serious. Since you and your readers are busy, try to write clearly and completely so that follow-up exchanges are unnecessary. Use a subject line that clearly identifies what the e-mail is about. Avoid abbreviations, slang, emoticons, or other informal devices except with close friends. Be sure to clearly identify who you are, your position, and why you are writing; not all e-mail addresses clearly identify the writer. Most important of all, remember that your e-mail can be forwarded to other readers, so make sure your messages reflect well on you.

EXERCISE Below are sample e-mails one of the authors received in a single semester. In each case, indicate what the problem with the e-mail is and how could it be written to be more effective for the audience.

MyWritingLab

1. Here. (The only message on an e-mail that submitted an attached paper)
2. Hey teach, Sorry I won't be in class. Family trouble. (A student with excessive absences)
3. Do you mind writing a letter of recommendation for me? The position I am applying for is attached. (A colleague looking for another job)
4. Can I drop my chemistry class? The teacher sucks. (An e-mail from an advisee to her advisor)
5. I really don't understand this assignment. Can I do it differently? I have got lots of ideas. (From a student beginning a class assignment)

Text Messaging Text messaging has some dangers. It is easy to respond too quickly to a question and so provide an incomplete answer. Because messages are necessarily short, they can often be incomplete or lack the necessary context.

Writing: A First Look

Since people text from their phones, it is easy to be excessively informal or make careless mistakes in spelling or grammar.

As with all writing, you should know your audience and person. If you are writing to your BFF, you can LOL 😊. If you are writing to someone you don't know well or with whom you have a professional relationship, avoid abbreviations and symbols. Crafting a short message can be harder than writing a longer text since it takes skill to be clear and concise. The short text message "Go ahead with 3 copies to Madison" will be confusing unless the context is clear. If you can't assume the context, and many people are too busy to recall the assumed details, you need to be more complete. "Please send 3 copies each of the editions of FemSpec from 4.1 to 10.2 to our Madison address, 324 Blakemore Road, Madison, WI 43432." A complete message may require more typing, but it will save time in the long run.

Twitter There are some fields, such as media studies or business, where you may be required to follow a Twitter account for an industry or area. Twitter is simply a system for sharing short messages of 140 characters. Most tweets are not very consequential. However, if you are writing or responding to a tweet, the goal is to have an interesting message in a very few words. Wordiness is out. You must assume some context. *Bring four copies of writing assignment 1 rough draft to class Monday for peer response.*

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE Rewrite the following messages so that they would be suitable as a tweet.

1. Katherine Briggs has done it again and in *River Marked* produced another compelling Mercy Thompson story with magic, mystery, and romance. She is on her honeymoon with husband, a werewolf, but their getaway doesn't last long as she ends up in a battle for her life with a river monster that threatens humankind. (Create a tweet for Katherine Briggs fans.)
2. This semester our online registration system will allow interested students to sign up for two semesters instead of just one, locking in their schedule for not just the Fall but also the Spring semester. Students are not required to schedule the second semester. If they do so, they will have to do an online drop and add process to change schedules. However, students who do not register for two semesters may find the classes they want closed for the Spring semester. (Create a tweet that could go to students.)

Blogs Sometimes it seems as if almost everyone has a blog. There is nothing fancy about a "blog," a term which is simply a blending of the words Web Log. A blog is a Web-based statement of the writer's idea, a Web essay. Many learning platforms allow you to blog to share your ideas with your class. Some teachers have students create blogs using a common blog-based program, such as WordPress or Blogger, which are very easy to use.

Blogs let you make an argument, share an enthusiasm, review a movie, and more. A blog needs to follow many of the strategies of writing explained in this text. However, in addition a blog lets you link your blog to other blogs or sites

that might relate to or develop an idea; it also allows you to use images or video files. Ideally blogs are the length of a single page, though they can be longer. In a blog you are competing on a very busy Internet, so it is very important to grab your reader's attention quickly and have something interesting to say with vivid language.

Writing for a Web Page Increasingly students applying for jobs provide on their resume an address to their Web pages. A Web page lets them post more information about their experience, show samples of their work, and shape the kind of professional impression that they make. Employers often look for the Web site of applicants because it not only lets them have more information about a job candidate but demonstrates whether or not the prospective employee has initiative and the necessary skills. In many careers, writing for a Web page can be a regular responsibility. A nurse might write for a hospital Web page on standard post-operative care. An engineer may write technical information about the company's product line. To help you get ready for your Web-based future, a number of college courses have students work on a Web-based project.

Web pages need to be attractive, easy to use, clear, and meet the needs of multiple users. Web design is an important skill beyond the scope of this text, but following are a few key ideas you should know.

- Keep the information clear and simple.
- Recognize that you need to grab and hold your reader's attention, so you need to make it immediately clear what information the Web site is providing.
- Use hypertext strategies. That means you can provide a simpler statement to meet the needs of most audiences and then provide links from key words to additional information for the reader who is seeking more.
- Make it easy for the reader to process information. Where appropriate, you should use visual strategies such as headings, subheadings, and bullets to guide your reader. Use pictures or other visuals that clearly make your point and make the site attractive.

Because Web pages are public documents, you want to make certain that your document is very well proofread.

Creating Presentations In your college career, you will need to create a variety of presentations using software like PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi. There are lots of links online about how to create effective presentations. Below are some of the key principles.

- Use the same format or design for all of your slides and keep the design simple. People are easily distracted.
- Keep individual slides simple. Don't put on a slide everything you are going to say. Instead focus on the key phrase, image, or graphic that you want your audience to remember.

- Don't clutter the slide with lots of images that will distract the viewers.
- When a gripping image or graphic will make your point, use the image or graphic.

Using Graphics and Text Increasingly, writers combine graphics with text to make their point. There are books that use a comic style to explain complex philosophical ideas. Graphic novels are an art form that many take seriously. New computer programs make it easy to create an illustrated storyboard with text to make your point or use pictures and add text.

Writing for such a graphic form requires several distinct techniques:

1. The images need to clearly make the point or support the point.
2. The writing needs to be very clear and concise.
3. Shorter sentences and precise vocabulary are needed to make certain that the reader doesn't get confused.
4. The graphic needs to fit the available space without overrunning the text.

6

Write ethically and avoid plagiarism.

Writing and Ethics

Think for a minute about how you would react to the following situation. You decide to vacation at a resort after reading a brochure that stressed its white-sand beach, scenic trails, fine dining, and peaceful atmosphere. When you arrive, you find the beach overgrown with weeds, the trails littered, and view unappealing, and the restaurant a greasy-spoon cafeteria. Worse, whenever you go outside, swarms of vicious black flies attack you. Wouldn't you feel cheated? Closer to home, think how you'd react if you decided to attend a college because of its distinguished faculty members only to discover upon arrival that they rarely teach on campus. The college counts on their reputations to attract students even though they are usually unavailable. Hasn't the college done something unethical?

As these examples show, good writing is also ethical writing. Like you, readers expect that what they read will be dependable information. Few, if any, would bother with a piece of writing that they realized was intended to deceive. A good test of the ethics of your writing is whether you would read your own work and act on the basis of it. Would you feel comfortable with it, or would you feel cheated, manipulated, deceived, or harmed in some way? By learning and practicing the principles of ethical writing, you will help ensure that your writing meets the standards that your readers expect.

The Principles of Ethical Writing

- **Truthful** Writing perceived as truthful should *be* truthful. Granted, a writer may use humorous exaggeration to make us laugh, and some sales pitches may stretch the truth a bit in order to entice buyers. ("Try Nu-Glo toothpaste and add sparkle to your life.") But most readers recognize

and discount such embellishments which, unlike major distortions, harm nobody. Deliberate, serious falsehoods, however, may harm not only the reader but sometimes the writer as well. Angered by the misrepresentations in the vacation brochure, you would certainly warn your friends against the resort and might even take some legal action against it.

- **Complete** Writing meant to be perceived as truthful should tell the whole truth, omitting nothing the reader needs to know in order to make informed decisions. The text should not be deliberately incomplete so as to mislead. Suppose that a university's recruitment brochures stress that 97 percent of its students get jobs upon graduation. What the brochures don't say is that only 55 percent of the jobs are in the graduates' chosen fields despite strong employer demand for graduates in those areas. Clearly these brochures are deceptive, perhaps attracting students who would otherwise choose schools with better placement records.
- **Clear** Writing should be clear to the reader. All of us know the frustration of trying to read a crucial regulation that is impossible to comprehend. A person who writes instructions so unclear that they result in harmful mistakes is partially responsible for the consequences. Readers have a right to expect understandable, accurate information. Thus, it would be deceptive for a group of state legislators to call a proposed bill the Public Education Enhancement Act when it would in fact bar teachers from belonging to unions.
- **No Harm** Writing should not be intended to harm the reader. Certainly it is fair to point out the advantages of a product or service that readers might not need. Most people understand the nature of this type of advertising. But think how unethical it would be for a writer to encourage readers to follow a diet that the writer knew was not only ineffective but harmful. Think of the harm a writer might cause by attempting, deliberately, to persuade readers to try crack cocaine.

Plagiarism

Often our writing draws on the work of others. We get information from an article, summarize what they have to say, perhaps paraphrase their wording, or use quotes that really help make a point. There are techniques for using information from sources discussed, which you should review if you are drawing information from sources. Still, pivotal to ethics in writing is avoiding plagiarism. When you turn in a piece of writing, you designate it as your own work in your own words. If you have taken material from sources (including the Internet) without using the proper documentation, even if it is in your own words, it is plagiarism, an unacceptable practice for any writer. If you use another writer's language, even in part, without using quotation marks, you are also engaging in plagiarism. Most faculty members check carefully for plagiarism and many automatically fail a paper for academic dishonesty. Some even give the student an F for the entire course.

Writing: A First Look

Why is this an important issue?

1. Other people have worked hard to develop ideas, do research, and write effectively. They deserve credit for their work when someone else uses it; it is their property. The authors of this text, for example, pay fees to use the essays of others. You would probably not like it if others used material from your papers without giving you credit.
2. Proper documentation strengthens your work since the source, often written by an expert, can add credibility to your claims if properly recognized.
3. If you take some material from a source and use it in your paper without documentation or quotation, you are falsely presenting another writer's work as your own. It is not much different from cheating and simply presenting an entire paper purchased from the Internet as your own work.
4. You are in the process of being trained in college to be professionals. Professionals need to be ethical. You wouldn't want someone to take credit for the computer program you wrote, charge you for repairs they didn't make, or write you a ticket for a traffic violation you didn't commit. Journalists have been fired, politicians have lost elections, and companies have been sued because they have been involved in plagiarism.
5. You certainly cannot develop as a writer if your writing isn't mostly your own work.

How can you avoid plagiarism and the failing grade that often comes with it?

1. Be committed to honesty. You should make certain your writing is your own work.
2. If an assignment does not ask you to use sources but you believe information from sources would be useful, talk to your teacher. There may be a reason that you are not asked to use sources. If sources are acceptable, you may be asked to follow a specific procedure for that assignment, such as turning in copies of your sources.
3. Be meticulous in documenting your sources, even if the material is in your own words, and in quoting and documenting any language that comes from another writer, even if it is only part of a sentence.
4. Carefully double-check to make certain that all the content in your text is your own and that if you used a source at all, it is documented.
5. Carefully double-check to make certain that all of your text uses your own language and that if you did use another writer's language, you used quotation marks.
6. If you are not sure about whether documentation or quotation marks are necessary, check with your teacher.
7. Make clear decisions about what counts as common knowledge. No one is expected to document what a reasonably educated person would know: that George Washington was our first president, that water consists

Writing: A First Look

of H₂O, or that the Supreme Court rules on constitutional issues. As you proceed in college, your stock of common knowledge will grow. Yet, be careful that you don't sweep too many things under the common knowledge rug. One good rule of thumb is that if you didn't know it before you read the source, you probably should not count it as common knowledge and should document the information.

You must make a conscious effort to avoid plagiarism. Ignorance and carelessness are rarely accepted as an excuse by professors trying hard to make certain that students are graded fairly and no one gets credit for work that is not their own. If you follow the guidelines in this text and ask your teacher for help when you are confused, you will easily avoid the embarrassment and the often dire consequences of being accused of plagiarism.

A First Look at Your Writing

Know your discourse community.

- Read works in a community and talk to participants to discover shared questions.
- Determine what counts as knowledge.
- Look at sample writing to determine conventions.



Know your purpose.

- Decide if you are going to inform, persuade, express yourself, entertain.
- Identify the specific purpose.

Know your audience.

- List what you think your reader already knows.
- Identify the reasons they will read your writing.
- Try to read as your audience to anticipate their response.



Apply principles of good writing.

- Write with fresh thinking that offers your own slant. Being honest about your observations will help.
- Write with a clear style in your own voice; don't overly inflate your language.
- Use the techniques in this text to create effective organization.



Make certain your writing is ethical!

- Write in a way that is truthful, unslanted, complete, clear, and helpful, rather than harmful.
- Make your writing your own, and avoid plagiarism.

Writing: A First Look

Text Credits

Credits are listed in order of appearance.

Halavage, Marianne: "Turn Down Your iPod Volume (Or Go Deaf)." Used by permission of the author.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- 1 Read for different purposes.
- 2 Employ different strategies for a first and second reading.
- 3 Overcome reading challenges.
- 4 Read critically by employing critical-thinking skills.
- 5 Use reading techniques to develop your writing.
- 6 Write a summary.
- 7 Write a critique.

Visit [MyWritingLab](#) to complete the writing assignments in this chapter and for more resources on critical reading.

Good writing requires good reading. You get ideas, information, a feel for language, and ideas for writing from what you read. As a writer, you are a part of a knowledge community that learns from reading and responds to the texts of others. Effective reading is not the passive process that many people imagine. On the contrary, it requires the ongoing interaction of your mind and the printed page. Bringing your knowledge and experience to bear on a piece of writing can help you assess its events, ideas, and conclusions. For example, an understanding of marriage, love, and conflict, as well as experience with divorce, can help readers comprehend an essay that explores divorce. As you read, you must also understand each point that's made, consider how the various parts fit together, and try to anticipate the direction the writing will take. Successful reading requires work. Fortunately, you can follow specific strategies to help yourself read better.

Orienting Your Reading

Different purposes require different approaches to reading. When reading for pleasure, you can relax and proceed at your own pace, slowing down to savor a section you especially enjoy, speeding up when you encounter less interesting

1

Read for different purposes.

From Chapter 2 of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, Eleventh Edition. James A. Reinking and Robert von der Osten. Copyright © 2017 by Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

material, and breaking off when you wish. Reading for information, for solid understanding, or to critique an argument calls for a more methodical approach. Sometimes, you read specifically for material or arguments that you can use in your own writing. Following are some useful questions to guide your reading:

- **Why am I reading this material?** Is it for long-term use, as a reference for a project, or as a building block to understanding more material?
- **How well do I need to know the material in the article?** Can you look back to the article as a reference? Is there only one main point you need to know? Are you going to be tested on much of the material in depth?
- **Is some material in the article more important to me than other material?** Sometimes in doing research you may be looking for a specific bit of information that is only a paragraph in a long article. If so, you can skim for the information. In most things you read, some sections are more important than others. Often you can read to get the main points of the article and not focus on all the details. Sometimes, of course, you need to know the material in depth.
- **What will I need to do with the material from the article?** If you are looking for ideas for your own writing, you might read quickly. If you will be responsible for writing a critique of the article, you will need to read carefully and critically.
- **What kind of reading does the material suggest?** The significance, the difficulty, and the nature of the writing all can influence how you read. An easy humorous narrative can be read in a more leisurely fashion. A careful argument on an important issue merits careful attention to the main points and the evidence and may even require you to outline the argument.

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE Look briefly at “The Appeal of the Androgynous Man”. Identify three purposes you could have for reading this essay. Identify how these purposes would affect how you would read the essay and what you would look for in the essay.

2

Employ different strategies for a first and second reading.

Strategies for Reading and Rereading

You don’t just jump in your car and take off. Usually you take a few minutes to think about where you want to go. Sometimes you even have to check your route. The same is true of effective reading. Because of the challenging nature of most college-level reading assignments, you should plan on more than one reading.

A First Reading

A good first reading should orient you to the material.

Orient Yourself to the Background of the Essay Before you begin, scan any accompanying biographical sketch and try to determine the writer’s expertise and views on the topic. Catherine Steiner Adair’s practice as a clinical

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

psychologist as well as her role as a research associate in Harvard's Department of Psychiatry give credibility to her claims about the impact of digital technology in the selection "The Revolution in the Living Room" (in the Reader of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, 11e). Sometimes there is material by the author or the editor on the writing of the essay. Professional essays often start with an abstract that provides a brief summary of the article. At this point you may want to judge the credibility of the source.

Use the Title as a Clue Most titles identify the topic and often the viewpoint as well. Thus, "If You're Happy and You Know It, Must I Know, Too?" (in the Reader of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, 11e) suggests that the author seems to be somewhat skeptical of the need to show our feelings, in this case through emoticons. Some titles signal the writer's primary strategy, whether it is a comparison, definition, or argument. "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts" (in the Reader of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, 11e) is clearly a comparison.

Skim to Get the Gist of the Article Sometimes you can just read the introductory and concluding paragraphs and the topic sentences (often the first or last sentences of paragraphs). Other times you will need to read the whole essay quickly. Try to gain an idea of the essay's main thrust, the key ideas that support it, and the ways that they are organized. In your first reading, you can skim the more difficult sections without trying to understand them fully.

Make Connections with What You Have Read When you've finished skimming the essay, and before you reread the essay, think about what you've learned and then, either by saying it to yourself or jotting it down, express it *in your own words*. You can hardly be said to understand what you've read, and you will be less likely to remember it, until you can state its essence in your own words. Go back and underline the thesis statement (a statement of the main point of the essay) or, if one is not included, try to formulate one in your own words. Try to identify the strategy used by the writer. Also, stop and identify what you already know about the topic and your connection to the issue. You will read more effectively if you can connect what you read to your own knowledge and interests. Jot down questions that the first reading has raised in your mind. Try to identify the strategies used by the writer; if any were effective, write those strategies down for your own possible use.

EXERCISE Reading Activities

MyWritingLab

1. Identify what you can about the background of the article, "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man," from the statement about the author.
2. Write what you expect based on the title.
3. Skim the essay and then write down what you identify as the main points of the essay. Identify the essay's thesis. Jot down at least two questions you have.

The Second Reading and Beyond

If the material was difficult or you need to know it well, a second or even third reading may be necessary. On the second reading, which will take more time than the first, you carefully absorb the writer's ideas.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

Read Carefully and Actively Read at a pace suitable to the material. Underline significant topic sentences as well as other key sentences and ideas or facts that you find important, but keep in mind that underlining in itself doesn't ensure comprehension. Restating the ideas in your own words is more effective. Depending on your purposes, you may want to write down the main points in your own words or jot down the ideas in the margins. As you proceed, examine the supporting sentences to see how well they back up the main idea. Keep an eye out for how the essay fits together.

Consider Reading as a Kind of Conversation with the Text Develop the habit of asking questions about facts, reasons, and ideas—practically anything in the essay. Jot your queries and their answers in the margins. You can see how a student interacted with the first page of Amy Gross's essay, "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man.") Good writers anticipate your questions and answer them; and because you have posed the questions yourself, you are more likely to see the connections in the text. If the author hasn't answered your questions, there may be problems with the work. It can help to keep a reading log in a notebook or as a computer file where you jot down your ideas as you are reading. Your notes or questions on your reading can be the basis for a writing project, or they can offer material you can use in a later research paper.

Master Unfamiliar Words At times, unfamiliar words can hinder your grasp of the material. Whenever you encounter a new word, circle it, use context to help gauge its meaning, check the dictionary for the exact meaning, and then record it in the margins or some other convenient place. If the writing is peppered with words you don't know, you may have to read the whole piece to figure out its general drift; then, look up key words, and finally reread the material. A word list from your reading can help you enhance the vocabulary in your writing. Sometimes unfamiliar vocabulary, such as "derivatives," is part of the professional vocabulary you will need to know to discuss the issues involved.

Take Conscious Steps to Understand Difficult Material When the ideas of a single section prove difficult, restate the points of those sections you do understand. Then experiment by stating in your own words different interpretations of the problem section and see which one best fits the writing as a whole.

Sometimes large sections or entire texts are extremely difficult. Following are several strategies you can use to help yourself:

- State the ideas that are easier for you to understand and use them as keys to unlock meanings that are difficult but not unintelligible. Save the most difficult sections until last. Don't think you have to understand everything completely. Some works take a lifetime to fully understand.
- Discuss a difficult essay with others who are reading it.
- Read simpler material on the topic.
- Go to your teacher for help. He or she may help you find background material that will make the selection easier.

Pull the Entire Essay Together Whenever you finish a major section of a lengthy essay, express your sense of what it means. Speak it out loud or write it down. If you have trouble seeing the connections between ideas, try visually representing them. You might make an outline that states the main points followed by subpoints. For a comparison, you might create a table with the main points of the comparison side by side. You can make a drawing connecting the main ideas in a network, list the steps in an instruction, or write out the main facts.

To strengthen your grasp of material, you'll need to remember for some time, try restating its main points a couple of days after the second reading. Sometimes it is helpful to explain the material to a sympathetic listener. If anything has become hazy or slipped your mind, reread the appropriate section(s). If you really must know the material, try making up your own test and giving it to yourself. Writing in your own words about what an essay meant can give you ideas for an essay that develops the reading, contradicts it, or takes a part of it and launches in a new direction.

Mastering Reading Problems

Many factors are important to effective reading. If your environment is too noisy, you are too tired, or you have something on your mind, you can have trouble reading. Do your reading at the time of day when you are most alert. Be sure you are in an environment that lets you concentrate and that is well lit. Try to be rested and comfortable. If you get tired, take a break for a specific time period; perhaps go for a short walk. If something else is bothering you, try to resolve the distraction or put it out of your mind. If you find the material uninteresting, try to find a connection between the topic and your interests and goals; read more actively. Of course, all these principles apply to your writing as well.

In turn, this broadened perspective can supply you with writing ideas.

- Write down new perspectives, insights, or ways of viewing the world.
- Keep a reading/writing journal where you summarize what you've read and jot down writing ideas.
- Take down specific ideas, facts, and even quotes that you might use.
- Always note the source so you can document it properly to avoid plagiarism.

Such a rich treasure trove will provide a powerful resource for writing ideas, writing strategies, and material to strengthen your essays.

If you have extensive problems reading for college, you can get help. Most colleges have courses in reading and tutors. College often requires a lot of reading, so take the steps necessary to be the most effective reader possible.

EXERCISE Reading Activities

1. Read "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man" a second time, continuing to write your own questions and notes in the margin.

3

Overcome reading challenges.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

2. Create a table with two columns comparing the all-man and the androgynous man.
3. Identify three words that you might find relatively new and find their definitions from the context and a dictionary.
4. Try explaining the article to a friend or your roommate.

4

Read critically by employing critical-thinking skills.

Reading to Critique: Reading Critically

In college you usually read not only to understand but also to evaluate what you read. Your instructors will want to know what you think about what you've read. Often you'll be asked whether you agree or disagree with a piece of writing. Sometimes you will be asked to write an explicit critique of what you read.

Merely because information and ideas are in print does not mean that they are true or acceptable. An essay, for example, might include faulty logic, unreasonable ideas, suspect facts, or unreliable authorities. Don't hesitate to dispute the writer's information.

- Does it match your experience?
- What biases or points of view might guide the writing?
- What assumptions is the writer making?
 - Do the pieces of evidence support the claim?
 - Do the ideas appear reasonable?
- What other positions are possible?
- Are there other pieces of evidence or other works that contradict these claims?
- Do the ideas connect in a logical way?

Knowledge of the principles of argumentation and various reasoning fallacies can help you critique a piece of writing.

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE Reading Activities

Prepare your critique of "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man" by doing the following:

1. Identify where and how the claims don't match your experience.
2. Indicate where the evidence does not support the claims.
3. Indicate at least a few places where the ideas do not appear reasonable.
4. Identify any evidence that seems to contradict the author's claims.
5. Evaluate whether the ideas connect in a logical way.

Reading Assignments Carefully

Many students could get better grades by simply reading their assignments more carefully. In assignments, professors often indicate possible topics, suggest readers, identify the kinds of information that should and **should not** be included,

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

set expectations on style and format, and establish procedures for the assignment such as the due date. You should read the assignment several times. Carefully note any specifications on topic, audience, organizational strategy, or style and format. Be sure to jot down procedures, such as due dates, in an assignment log or your calendar. Do not make assumptions. If you are not clear about a part of the assignment, ask your instructor.

The following is a very specific assignment; read it over carefully to determine what it requires.

Objective Description Short Assignment (50 points)

Typed final draft following the class format guide is due in class September 12.

This assignment page should be turned in with your completed description:

The corner of Perry and State Street, near the Starr building has been the scene of a terrible accident. The insurance company has asked you to write a brief objective description (approximately two pages double spaced) of the intersection for a report for possible use in court. Your description should not try to take a position about the relative danger of the intersection but rather provide as clear a picture as possible of the situation. The description should include the arrangement of the streets including the number of lanes, the businesses located immediately around the intersection, traffic and pedestrian flow, and the timing of the lights and the effect of that timing on traffic.

Checklist:

The description should:

1. Provide the general location of the intersection.
2. Indicate their traffic function—i.e., major route from 131 into downtown Big Rapids.
3. Describe the actual roads.
4. Identify the businesses and their locations.
5. Describe traffic and pedestrian flow.
6. Detail the timing of the lights.
7. Maintain objective language.
8. Use clear, nontechnical language.

The assignment specifies the topic (a specific intersection), an audience (a court of law and an insurance company), key elements that are required as part of the description, a general style of writing (objective without taking a stance), and procedures including a deadline and format constraints. Clearly a short paper about the accident would not be acceptable since the assigned topic is the actual structure of the intersection. A style of writing that stressed the “horribly short lights that force students to scurry across like mice in front of a cat” would

lose points since it takes a position and is not objective. Any description that left out any of the required elements (such as the timing of the lights) would also lose points.

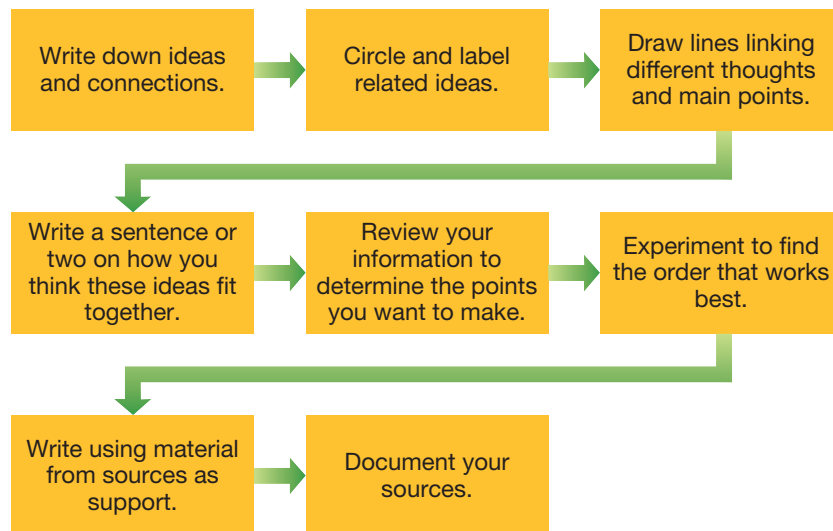
5

Use reading techniques to develop your writing.

Reading as a Writer

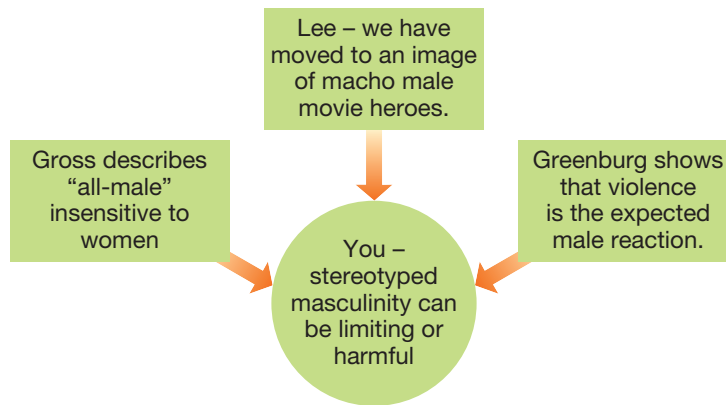
All of us who write can use reading as a springboard for improving our writing. You can do several things to make your reading especially useful.

As you read, the views of others, the experiences they relate, and the information they present often deepen your understanding of yourself, your relationships, and your surroundings. In turn, this broadened perspective can supply you with writing ideas. When possibilities surface, be sure to record them. Some writers keep a reading journal in which they summarize what they've read and jot down writing ideas that come to mind. In addition, you can take down specific ideas, facts, and perhaps even a few particularly telling quotations that you discover. You may want to incorporate this material into your writing at a later time. Carefully record the source so that you can document it properly in order to avoid plagiarism.

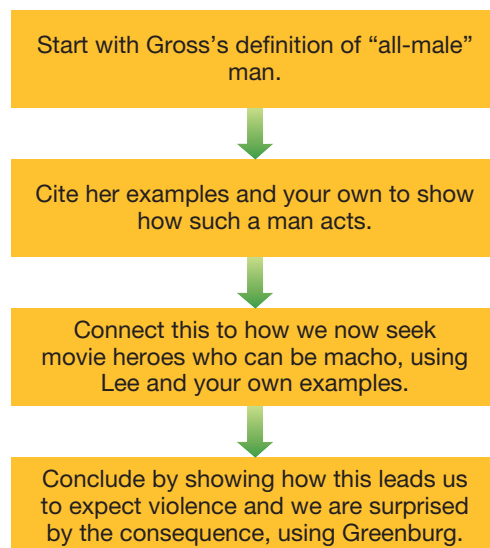


When you read various sources that explore the same topic or related topics, you may notice connections among their ideas. Let's see how you might use synthesis in writing an actual essay. Suppose you've read Amy Gross's "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man," "Sound and Fury" by Dan Greenburg, and Chris Lee's "Invasion of the Bodybuilders" (in the Reader of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, 11e).

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading



How do you use this to write an essay?



All of these ideas and examples could help you build an essay that points out how men can sometimes become desensitized or trapped, even victimized, by living according to stereotypes of masculinity. If you will be writing a paper that synthesizes material from various sources, review how to document your sources properly.

Because writers solve problems, you'll want to pay attention to the techniques and strategies that other writers use. If you find an introduction, an organizational pattern, a transition, a certain description, or a comparison unusually engaging, study the writer's technique. Perhaps you can use it yourself. Similarly, observe when a piece of writing fails and try to determine why.

1. Identify at least two strategies that the author used that you would find useful.
2. Identify at least two phrases that you found effective.
3. Identify at least two ideas that could spark your own writing.

AMY GROSS

both male and
female in one

The Appeal of the Androgynous Man

Amy Gross, a native of Brooklyn, New York, earned a sociology degree at Connecticut College. Upon graduation, she entered the world of fashion publishing and has held writing or editorial positions at various magazines, including Talk, Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping, Elle, and Mirabella. She is the newly appointed editor-in-chief of O, the Oprah Magazine. In our selection, which first appeared in Mademoiselle, Gross compares androgynous men favorably to macho "all-men."

Does she favor androgynous men? What kind of appeal?

She will give a woman's perspective. She writes for and edits women's magazines.

Seems like she is going to talk about the advantages of androgynous men as compared to other men. Sees them as better.

Attempt to counter stereotype? Can't androgynous men also be effeminate?

Suggests "all-men" men reject behaviors and interests they consider feminine, but isn't she stereotyping? Are all these men like this? She seems to be exaggerating.

- 1 James Dean was my first androgynous man.¹ I figured I could talk to him. He was anguished and I was 12, so we had a lot in common. With only a few exceptions, all the men I have liked or loved have been a certain kind of man: a kind who doesn't play football or watch the games on Sunday, who doesn't tell dirty jokes featuring broads or chicks, who is not contemptuous of conversations that are philosophically speculative, introspective, or otherwise foolish according to the other kind of man. He is more self-amused, less inflated, more quirky, vulnerable and responsive than the other sort (the other sort, I'm visualizing as the guys on TV who advertise deodorant in the locker room). He is more like me than the other sort. He is what social scientists and feminists would call androgynous: having the characteristics of both male and female.
- 2 Now the first thing I want you to know about the androgynous man is that he is neither effeminate nor hermaphroditic. All his primary and secondary sexual characteristics are in order and I would say he's all-man, but that is just what he is not. He is more than all-man. both male and female sex in one
- 3 The merely all-man man, for one thing, never walks to the grocery store unless the little woman is away visiting her mother with the kids, or is in the hospital having a kid, or there is no little woman. All-men men don't know how to shop in a grocery store unless it is to buy a 6-pack and some pretzels. Their ideas of nutrition expand beyond a 6-pack and pretzels only to take in steak, potatoes, scotch or rye whiskey, and maybe a wad of cake or apple pie. All-men men have absolutely no taste in food, art, books, movies, theatre, dance, how to live, what are good questions, what is funny, or anything else I care about. It's not exactly that the all-man's man is an uncouth illiterate. He may be educated, well-mannered, and on a first-name basis with fine wines. One all-man man I knew was a handsome individual who gave the impression of being gentle, affectionate, and sensitive. He sat and ate dinner one night while I was doing something endearingly feminine at the sink. At one point, he mutely held up his glass to indicate in a primitive, even ape-like, way his need for a refill. This was in 1967, before Women's Liberation. Even so, I was disturbed. Not enough to break the glass over his handsome head, not even enough to mutely indicate the

¹James Dean (1931–1955) was a 1950s film star who gained fame for his portrayals of restless, defiant young men.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

whereabouts of the refrigerator, but enough to remember that moment in all its revelatory clarity. No androgynous man would ever brutishly expect to be waited on without even a “please.” (With a “please,” maybe.)

4 The brute happened to be a doctor—not a hard hat—and, to all appearances, couth. But he had bought the whole superman package, complete with that fragile beast, the male ego. The androgynous man arrives with a male ego too, but his is not as imperialistic. It doesn’t invade every area of his life and person. Most activities and thoughts have nothing to do with masculinity or femininity. The androgynous man knows this. The all-man man doesn’t. He must keep a constant guard against anything even vaguely feminine (i.e., “sissy”) rising up in him. It must be a terrible strain.

5 Male chauvinism is an irritation, but the real problem I have with the all-man man is that it’s hard for me to talk to him. He’s alien to me, and for this I’m at least half to blame. As his interests have not carried him into the sissy, mine have never taken me very far into the typically masculine terrains of sports, business and finance, politics, cars, boats and machines. But blame or no blame, the reality is that it is almost as difficult for me to connect with him as it would be to link up with an Arab shepherd or Bolivian sandalmaker. There’s a similar culture gap.

6 It seems to me that the most masculine men usually end up with the most feminine women. Maybe they like extreme polarity. I like polarity myself, but the poles have to be within earshot. As I’ve implied, I’m very big on talking. I fall in love for at least three hours with anyone who engages me in a real conversation. I’d rather a man point out a paragraph in a book—wanting to share it with me—than bring me flowers. I’d rather a man ask what I think than tell me I look pretty. (Women who are very pretty and accustomed to hearing that they are pretty may feel differently.) My experience is that all-men men read books I don’t want to see paragraphs of, and don’t really give a damn what I or any woman would think about most issues so long as she looks pretty. They have a very limited use for women. I suspect they don’t really like us. The androgynous man likes women as much or as little as he likes anyone.

7 Another difference between the all-man man and the androgynous man is that the first is not a star in the creativity department. If your image of the creative male accessorizes him with a beret, smock and artist’s palette, you will not believe the all-man man has been seriously short-changed. But if you allow as how creativity is a talent for freedom, associated with imagination, wit, empathy, unpredictability, and receptivity to new impressions and connections, then you will certainly pity the dull, thick-skinned, rigid fellow in whom creativity sets no fires.

8 Nor is the all-man man so hot when it comes to sensitivity. He may be true-blue in the trenches, but if you are troubled, you’d be wasting your time trying to milk comfort from the all-man man.

9 This is not blind prejudice. It is enlightened prejudice. My biases were confirmed recently by a psychologist named Sandra Lipsetz Bem, a professor at Stanford University. She brought to attention the fact that high masculinity in males (and high femininity in females) has been “consistently correlated with lower overall intelligence and lower creativity.” Another psychologist, Donald W. MacKinnon, director of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at the University of California in Berkeley, found that “creative males give more expression to the feminine side of their nature than do less creative men.... [They] score relatively high on femininity, and this despite the fact that, as a group, they do not present an effeminate appearance or give

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

evidence of increased homosexual interests or experiences. Their elevated scores on femininity indicate rather an openness to their feelings and emotions, a sensitive intellect and understanding self-awareness and wide-ranging interests including many which in the American culture are thought of as more feminine....”

- 10 Dr. Bem ran a series of experiments on college students who had been categorized as masculine, feminine, or androgynous. In three tests of the degree of nurturance—warmth and caring—the masculine men scored painfully low (painfully for anyone stuck with a masculine man, that is). In one of those experiments, all the students were asked to listen to a “troubled talker”—a person who was not neurotic but simply lonely, supposedly new in town and feeling like an outsider. The masculine men were the least supportive, responsive or humane. “They lacked the ability to express warmth, playfulness and concern,” Bem concluded. (She’s giving them the benefit of the doubt. It’s possible the masculine men didn’t express those qualities because they didn’t possess them.)
- 11 The androgynous man, on the other hand, having been run through the same carnival of tests, “performs spectacularly. He shuns no behavior just because our culture happens to label it as female and his competence crosses both the instrumental [getting the job done, the problem solved] and the expressive [showing a concern for the welfare of others, the harmony of the group] domains. Thus, he stands firm in his opinion, he cuddles kittens and bounces babies and he has a sympathetic ear for someone in distress.”
- 12 Well, a great mind, a sensitive and warm personality are fine in their place, but you are perhaps skeptical of the gut appeal of the androgynous man. As a friend, maybe, you’d like an androgynous man. For a sexual partner, though, you’d prefer a jock. There’s no arguing chemistry, but consider the jock for a moment. He competes on the field, whatever his field is, and bed is just one more field to him: another opportunity to perform, another fray. Sensuality is for him candy to be doled out as lure. It is a ration whose flow is cut off at the exact point when it has served its purpose—namely, to elicit your willingness to work out on the field with him.
- 13 Highly masculine men need to believe their sexual appetite is far greater than a woman’s (than a nice woman’s). To them, females must be seduced: Seduction is a euphemism for a power play, a con job. It pits man against woman (or woman against man). The jock believes he must win you over, incite your body to rebel against your better judgment: in other words—conquer you.
- 14 The androgynous man is not your opponent but your teammate. He does not seduce: he invites. Sensuality is a pleasure for him. He’s not quite so goal-oriented. And to conclude, I think I need only remind you here of his greater imagination, his wit and empathy, his unpredictability, and his receptivity to new impressions and connections.

Writing a Summary

6

Write a summary.

Often in college you will be asked to write about what you read. This culminates in the research paper. However, sometimes you will have to write shorter summaries and critiques.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

A summary states the main points of an essay in your own words. It is a useful way to learn what you read. It is also how you share what you read. Instructors sometimes have students read different books and articles and share the results. Many readers summarize their favorite books online as a service to others searching for something good to read. Businesses and professionals will have employees summarize articles to share with their colleagues. The art of summarizing is the backbone of research writing.

A good summary lets someone who hasn't read the essay understand what it says. A summary can be one or more paragraphs. It should

- provide a context for the essay,
- introduce the author of the essay,
- and state the thesis (these first three elements often form the introduction of a multiparagraph summary),
- then state the main points of the essay (sometimes but not always based on the topic sentences), and
- conclude by pulling the essay together.

To prepare to write a summary, follow the steps in effective reading:

- Underline the main points of the essay.
- Write in the margins or a separate sheet of paper those main points in your own words.
- Decide the order that would make sense for your reader.
- Prepare a brief outline.
- Use your own words; if you use the author's words, quote, and document to avoid plagiarism.
- Don't insert your own views, since a summary is about the author's position.

A Sample Single Paragraph Summary of "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man"

What kind of man should appeal to women? According to Amy Gross, the editor-in-chief of *O* magazine, in "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man," her ideal is and the ideal of women should be the "androgynous man," a man who shares the personality characteristics of both male and female. To make her point, Amy Gross contrasts the all-man man and the androgynous man. She believes that the all-man man does not share in activities like shopping, has no taste in the arts, is imperialistic, resists anything feminine, and is interested in only exclusively male topics. Worse, she points to studies that show that more masculine men are less creative. Further, she argues that the all-man tends to see women as something to conquer rather than as partners. The androgynous man, by comparison, is very different. He does not resist things that are feminine and so shares in domestic activities, is comfortable with the arts, and can share interests with women. He is shown by studies to be more creative. Further, according to Gross, "The androgynous man is not your opponent but your teammate." As a result, she concludes that the androgynous man has the qualities that women should really look for in a man.

7

Write a critique.

Writing a Critique

Often you will be asked to give your views on an essay, indicating where you agree and disagree with the author's position. A faculty member may ask students to critically respond to an article. Employers may want your response to someone else's report or a professional article affecting your field. In general, writing a critique is a vital part of building an argument or a critical research paper. Remember you can always agree with part of what a person says and disagree with other parts. A critique combines a summary of the article with your thoughtful reaction. Most critiques consist of several paragraphs. A critique usually includes the following:

- A context for the essay
- An introduction to the author
- A statement of the essay's thesis
- The thesis for your critique
- A summary of the essay
- A statement of the points with which you agree
- A statement with reasons and evidence for your disagreement
- A conclusion

You are well prepared to write a critique if you follow the steps for reading effectively and reading critically.

- In addition to the summarizing comments, jot down whether you agree or disagree and why.
- It may be helpful to create a table that lists the major claims of the essay and your response, including whether you agree or disagree and why, including reasons or facts you have at your disposal.
- Determine an organizational pattern that works.
- Write your draft and revise.

A Sample Multiparagraph Critique of "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man"

- 1 What kind of man should appeal to women? According to Amy Gross, the editor-in-chief of *O* magazine, in "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man," her ideal is and the ideal of women should be the "androgynous man," a man who shares the personality characteristics of both male and female. But matters are not so simple. Amy Gross falsely divides men into two stereotyped categories. In fact, real men are much more complex.
- 2 To make her point, Amy Gross contrasts the all-man man and the androgynous man. She believes that the all-man man does not share in activities like shopping, has no taste in the arts, is imperialistic, resists anything feminine, and is interested in only exclusively male topics. Worse, she points to studies that show that more masculine men are less creative. Further, she argues that the all-man tends to see women as something to conquer rather than as partners. The androgynous man, by comparison, is very different. He

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

does not resist things that are feminine and so shares in domestic activities, is comfortable with the arts, and can share interests with women. He is shown by studies to be more creative. Further, according to Gross, "The androgynous man is not your opponent but your teammate." As a result, she concludes that the androgynous man has the qualities that women should really look for in a man.

3 She is right that if the all-man male were like she said, he would truly be undesirable. No woman should want a partner who takes her for granted, doesn't share her interests, or treats her simply as someone to conquer. But is that really what men are like? My brother plays football and loves to watch it on television. He also hunts and fishes. But that isn't all he does. He plays with kittens, loves to cook, plays the guitar and sings, and secretly likes "chick flicks." As far as I can tell, he treats his girlfriend well. He seems genuinely concerned about her, will spend hours shopping with her, goes to events that interest her, and generally seems sensitive to her needs. Is he an "all-man" or an "androgynous man"? Equally a man can write poetry, love Jane Austen, cook gourmet meals, and still take women for granted. From what I have read, Pablo Picasso treated women dreadfully, even if he was a great artist. Was he an "all-man" man or an "androgynous man"?

4 Ms. Gross seems to present evidence from psychological studies that show that more masculine men are less creative than more feminine men. Maybe so, but she doesn't give us the evidence we need to make up our own minds. How did they actually measure masculinity and femininity? How many people were tested? What did they count as creativity? Personally I have my doubts. Writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer were pretty masculine men and yet were still very creative. I know a lot of men who have feminine characteristics who aren't any more creative than the average person.

5 The mistake Ms. Gross makes is that she believes that women should select types of men. They shouldn't. Women date, love, and marry individual men. As a result, a woman should really be concerned about whether the man shares her interests, treats her well, has qualities she can love, and will be faithful. Where the man fits on Ms. Gross's little chart is far less important than the kind of man he is, regardless of whether he is "androgynous."

Successful Reading

Why you are reading the material.

Enjoyment

To use specific information

Responsible for the material

Read at your own pace.

Skim and then slow down at key info when you take notes.

- Orient to background.
- Use title as clue.
- Skim—use intro and conclusion.
- State the main ideas in your own words.

Read again more carefully.

- Underline topic sentences, key info.
- Write important material in own words.
- Jot down questions and ideas in margins or separate pages.

Outline if it will help you follow ideas.

As you finish major sections write down or say the major ideas.

Master more difficult material.

- Use context or look up unfamiliar words.
- State easier ideas and use them to unlock difficult material.
- Discuss material with others.
- If necessary, read easier background material.

Read as a writer.

- Jot down ideas for writing.
- Identify techniques you like.
- Make a note of organizational patterns.

Writing a summary

Writing a critique

Take notes of main points. Identify any disagreements.

Strategies for Successful and Critical Reading

Text Credits

Credits are listed in order of appearance.

Gross, Amy: "The Appeal of the Androgynous Man," *Mademoiselle*, 1976. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- 1 Analyze the assignment to understand its goals.
- 2 Use different strategies to find and develop a topic.
- 3 Gather information to support your topic.
- 4 Think critically about your topic.
- 5 Organize and outline your paper.
- 6 Develop an effective thesis statement.
- 7 Write a first draft of your paper.

Visit [MyWritingLab](#) to complete the writing assignments in this chapter and for more resources on planning and drafting.

Many students believe that good essays are dashed off in a burst of inspiration by born writers. Some boast that they cranked out A papers in an hour. Perhaps. But for most of us, writing is a process that takes time and work. It is also a messy process. Don't confuse your planning and drafting with a final version. If your grammar and spell check slow you down, turn them off until you are revising a later draft or proofreading your work.

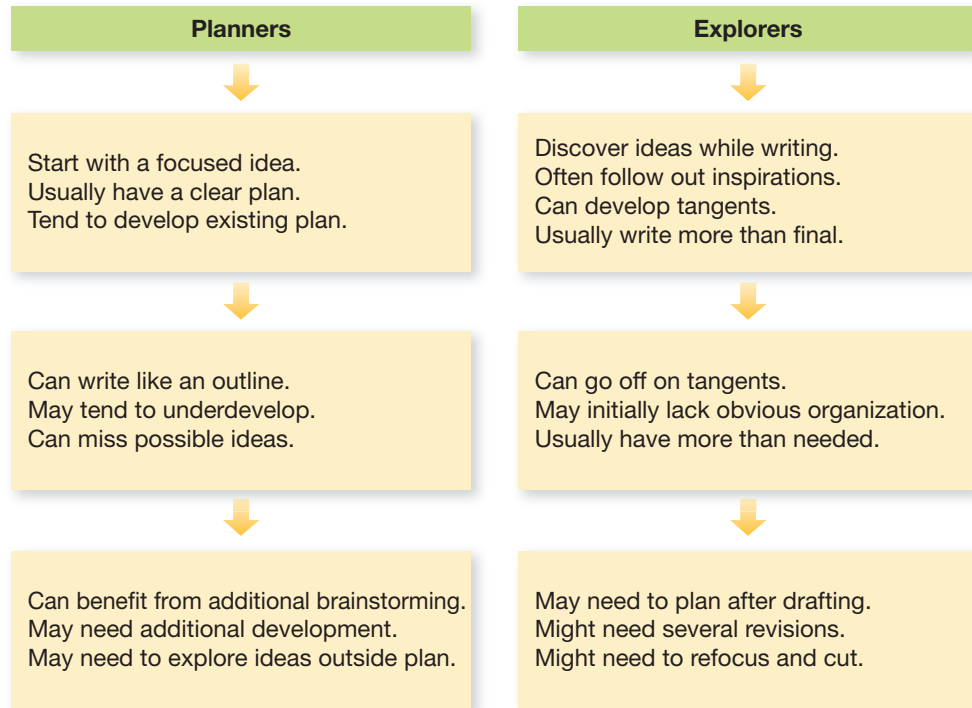
Writing is a flexible process. No approach works for every writer. Some writers establish their purpose and draft a plan for carrying it out at the start of every project. Others begin with a tentative purpose or plan and discover their final direction as they write.

Regardless of how it unfolds, the writing process consists of the following stages. Advancing through each stage will guide you if you have no plan or if you've run into snags with your approach. Once you're familiar with these stages, you can combine or rearrange them as needed.

- Understanding the assignment
- Zeroing in on a topic
- Gathering information
- Organizing the information
- Developing a thesis statement
- Writing the first draft

From Chapter 3 of *Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, Eleventh Edition. James A. Reinking and Robert von der Osten. Copyright © 2017 by Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved.

Types of Writers



Understanding the Assignment

1

Analyze the assignment to understand its goals.

Instructors differ in how they approach writing assignments. Some specify the topic; some give you several topics to choose from; and still others offer you a free choice. Likewise, some instructors dictate the length and format of the essay, whereas others don't. Whatever the case, be sure you understand the assignment before you go any further.

Think of it this way: If your boss asked you to report on ways of improving the working conditions in your office and you turned in a report on improving worker benefits, would you expect the boss's approval? Following directions is crucial, so ask your instructor to clear up any questions you might have about the assignment. Don't be timid; it's much better to ask for directions than to receive a low grade for failing to follow them.

Once you understand the assignment, consider the project *yours*. If you are asked to describe a favorite vacation spot for a local newspaper, here is your chance to inform others about a place that is special to you. By asking yourself what the assignment allows you to accomplish, you can find your own purpose.

Zeroing in on a Topic

A subject is a broad discussion area: sports, college life, culture, and the like. A topic is one small segment of a subject, such as testing athletes for drug use, Nirvana College's academic probation policy, or texting. If you choose your own topic, pick one that is narrow enough so that you can develop it properly. Avoid sprawling, slippery issues that lead to a string of trite generalities.

In addition, choose a familiar topic or one you can learn enough about in the time available. Avoid overworked topics such as arguments about the death penalty or the legal drinking age, which generally repeat the same old points. Instead, select a topic that lets you draw upon your unique experiences and insights and offer a fresh perspective to your reader.

2

Use different strategies to find and develop a topic.

Strategies for Finding a Topic

Whenever your instructor assigns a general subject, you'll need to stake out a limited topic suitable for your paper. If you're lucky, the right one will come to mind immediately. More often, though, you'll need to resort to some special strategy. Following are six proven strategies that many writers use. Not all of them will work for everyone, so experiment to find those that produce a topic for you.

Tapping Your Personal Resources Over the years, you've packed your mind with memories of family gatherings, school activities, movies, concerts, plays, parties, jobs, books you've read, TV programs, dates, discussions, arguments, and so on. All these experiences can provide suitable topics. Suppose you've been asked to write about some aspect of education. Recalling the difficulties you had last term at registration, you might argue for better registration procedures. Or if you're a hopeless TV addict who must write on some advertising topic, why not analyze TV advertising techniques?

Anything you've read in magazines or journals, newspapers, novels, short stories, or textbooks can also trigger a topic. An article reviewing the career of a well-known politician might stir thoughts of a friend's experience in running for the student council.

EXERCISE Select five of the subjects listed below. Tapping your personal resources, name one topic suggested by each. For each topic, list three questions that you might answer in a paper.

MyWritingLab

Life on a city street

A particular field of work

Some branch of the federal bureaucracy

Concern for some aspect of the environment

Some aspect of nature

Contemporary forms of dancing

Youth gangs

Fashions in clothing

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

Saving money	Trendiness
Home ownership	Human rights
Schools in your town	Public transportation
Leisure activities	Childhood fears
Trends in technology	A new scientific discovery
A best-selling book	A religious experience

Keeping a Journal Many writers record their experiences in a journal. A journal provides a number of possible writing topics as well as valuable writing practice.

In a journal you have the freedom to explore thoughts, feelings, responses, attitudes, and beliefs without reservation and without concern for “doing it right.” *You* control the content and length of the entry. Furthermore, depending on your instructor’s preference, you usually don’t have to worry about correct spelling or grammar. Journal writing does not represent a finished product but rather an exploration.

A few simple guidelines ensure effective journal entries:

1. Write on the computer or in any kind of notebook that appeals to you; the content, not the package, is the important thing.
2. Write on a regular basis—at least five times a week, if possible. In any event don’t write by fits and starts, cramming two weeks of entries into one sitting.
3. Write for 10–20 minutes, longer if you have more to say. Don’t aim for uniform entry length, such as three paragraphs or a page and a half. Simply explore your reactions to the happenings in your life or to what you have read, heard in class, or seen on television. The length will take care of itself.
4. If you have multiple pages of journals in your word processor, you can use Find to search key words to discover related ideas.

Let’s examine a typical journal entry by Sam, a first-year composition student.

Last week went back to my hometown for the first time since my family moved away and while there dropped by the street where I spent my first twelve years. Visit left me feeling very depressed. Family home still there, but its paint peeling and front porch sagging. Sign next to the porch said house now occupied by Acme Realtors. While we lived there, front yard lush green and bordered by beds of irises. Now an oil-spattered parking lot. All the other houses on our side of the street gone, replaced by a row of dumpsy buildings housing dry cleaner, bowling alley, hamburger joint, shoe repair shop, laundromat. All of them dingy and rundown looking, even though only a few years old.

Other side of the street in no better shape. Directly across from our house a used-car dealership with rows of junky looking cars. No trace left of the Little League park that used to be there. Had lots of

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

fun playing baseball and learned meaning of sportsmanship. To left of the dealership my old grade school, now boarded and abandoned. Wonder about my fifth-grade teacher Mrs. Wynick. Is she still teaching? Still able to make learning a game, not a chore? Other side of dealership the worst sight of all. Grimy looking plant of some sort pouring foul smelling smoke into the air from a discolored stack. Smoke made me cough.

Don't think I'll revisit my old street again.

This journal entry could spawn several essays. Sam might explore the causes of residential deterioration, define sportsmanship, explain how Mrs. Wynick made learning a game, or argue for stricter pollution control laws.

EXERCISE Write journal entries over the next week or two for some of the following items that interest you. If you have trouble finding a suitable topic for a paper, review the entries for possibilities.

MyWritingLab

Encounters with technology
Single or married life
Financial or occupational considerations

Developing relationships
Parents
Ideas gained through reading

Sorting Out a Subject All of us sort things. We do it whenever we tackle the laundry, clear away a sink full of dishes, or tidy up a basement or garage. Sorting out a subject is similar. First, we break our broad subject into categories and subcategories and then allow our minds to roam over the different items and see what topics we can turn up. The chart on the next page shows what one student found when she explored the general topic of Internet communication. It is easy to create a table in your software program or use graphic visuals that help you highlight relationships.

As you'll discover for yourself, some subjects yield more topics than others; some, no topics at all.

EXERCISE Select two of the following subjects and then subdivide those two into five topics.

MyWritingLab

Advertising
Dwellings
Fashions
Magazines

Movies
Occupations
Popular music
Social classes

The space program
Sports
Television programs
Vacations

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

Results of Sorting out the Subject of Internet Communication					
Personal		Community		Large Community of Followers	
Texting	Chat	Discussion Boards	Facebook	Blogs	Tweeting
The reasons texting is replacing E-mail	The growing use of chat for online support.	Fan Boards	Why FB became so popular.	Political Blogs Corporate Blogs Personal Blogs	Celebrity tweets Political tweets Tweeting Friends Product Tweets
The style of texting	The role of Chat in higher education and online classes.	Professional Discussion Boards	The challenges of keeping FB profitable.	How to write a successful blog	The ways tweeting is increasingly used in political campaigns.
The extent to which texting influences language use	The comparison of online chat and phone calls.	Discussion Boards in the classroom	Effects FB has on the social relations of college students.	The way blog may keep us in our personal information bubble.	The ways tweets are used to manage a celebrity's image.
The dangers of texting and driving; the effects of texting on attention.		Frequently Asked Questions		The extent to which blogs give average citizens a political voice.	A classification of the different kinds of people who tweet and follow tweets.
		The problem of civility in discussion boards			
		The growing use of discussion boards with online news media			

Asking Questions Often, working your way through these basic questions will lead you to a manageable topic:

1. Can I define my subject?
2. Does it break into categories?
3. If so, what comparisons can I make among these categories?
4. If my subject is divided into parts, how do they work together?
5. Does my subject have uses? What are they?
6. What are some examples of my subject?
7. What are the causes or origins of my subject?
8. What impact has my subject had?

Let's convert these general questions into specific questions about telescopes, a broad general subject:

1. What is a telescope?
2. What are the different kinds of telescopes?
3. How are they alike? How do they differ?
4. What are the parts of each kind of telescope, and how do they work together?
5. What are telescopes used for?
6. What are some well-known telescopes?
7. Who invented the telescope?
8. What impact have telescopes had on human life and knowledge?

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

Each of these questions offers a starting point for a suitably focused essay. Question 3 might launch a paper comparing reflecting and refracting telescopes; question 6 might be answered in a paper about the Hubble Space Telescope and the problems with it.

EXERCISE *Select two of the following subjects. Create general questions and then convert them into specific questions. Finally, suggest two essay topics for each of your two subjects.*

MyWritingLab

Astrology	Games	Shopping malls
Books	Microorganisms	Stars
Colleges	Plays	Television
Emotions	Religions	Warships

Freewriting The freewriting strategy snares thoughts as they race through your mind, yielding a set of sentences that you then look over for writing ideas. To begin, turn your pen loose and write for about five minutes on your general subject. Put down everything that comes into your head, without worrying about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. What you produce is for your eyes alone. If the thought flow becomes blocked, write “I’m stuck, I’m stuck ...” until you break the mental logjam. When your writing time is up, go through your sentences one by one and extract potential topic material. If you draw a blank, write for another five minutes and look again. A useful strategy is to take key ideas or phrases from your freewriting and then in a separate page or file do additional freewriting on each of those ideas or phrases.

The following example shows the product of one freewriting session. Drew’s instructor had assigned a two- or three-page paper on technology; and since Drew is a business major, he considers a more personal technology with which he has experience, the cell phone.

Technology, huh. What do I know about technology? Cell phones are technology? What about them? There are so many kinds. Razors, Blackberries. I love my new iPhone. It does everything, plays music, lets me text, check out YouTube, e-mail, take pictures and store them. They change people lives. But how? Well, we are always on them talking to friends, to anybody, and parents and teachers never get it. But why do we talk on them so much. Stuck, stuck, stuck. Well, I keep in touch with friends. Some are away at college. My girlfriend is always calling me. We also get lots of stuff done, like checking out my stupid bills.

This example suggests at least three papers. For people shopping for a new cell phone, Drew could identify the advantages of different types. He could write to people who are considering buying an iPhone about the features of the phone. He could write to those perplexed by student behavior to explain why students use cell phones so extensively.

Brainstorming Brainstorming, a close cousin of freewriting, captures fleeting ideas in words, fragments, and sometimes sentences, rather than in a series of sentences. Brainstorming garners ideas faster than the other strategies do.

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

But unless you move immediately to the next stage of writing, you may lose track of what some of your fragmentary jottings mean.

To compare the results of freewriting and brainstorming a topic, we've converted our freewriting example into this list, which typifies the results of brainstorming:

Types of Cell Phones	Stores Pictures
Razors	text message
Blackberries	e-mails
iPhones	why people use e-mail
plays music	to coordinate life
view YouTube	to get things done
takes pictures	to keep in touch

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE *Return to the five subjects you selected for the exercise in the section titled "Tapping Your Personal Resources." Freewrite or brainstorm for five minutes on each one and then choose a topic suitable for a two- or three-page essay. State your topic, intended audience, and purpose.*

Narrowing a familiar subject may yield not only a topic but also the main divisions for a paper on it. Drew's freewriting session uncovered several possible cell phone topics as well as a way of approaching each: classifying types of cell phones and writing about the strengths and weaknesses of each or identifying the different features of an iPhone and describing each feature and how it works or explaining each of the reasons college students use cell phones so frequently. Ordinarily, though, the main divisions will emerge only after you have gathered material to develop your topic. Drew, on considering his options, decides he doesn't know enough about types of cell phones and might get carried away when writing about the iPhone. He decides to write about the reasons college students are so attached to their cell phones.

Identifying Your Audience and Purpose

You can identify your purpose and audience at several stages in the writing process. Sometimes both are set by the assignment and guide your selection of a topic. For example, you might be asked to write the college president to recommend improvements in the school's registration system. At other times, you may have to write a draft before you can determine either. Usually, though, the selection of audience and purpose goes hand in hand with determining a topic. Think of the different types of information Drew would gather if he wrote for (1) college students to break them of their cell phone habits, (2) college professors and parents to make cell phone use seem less peculiar, (3) or a sociology professor to demonstrate how common behaviors can be explained through sociological theories.

Considering Your Media

Part of considering your audience and purpose is thinking about the media in which it will be presented. Is your essay going to be part of a blog post, collected with other essays to form a Web page, a separate and distinct paper, a longer e-mail? Understanding the media may help you better decide how formal you want to make your writing, identify what kinds of images or even media clips you might include in your work, and judge how your work might fit with other works around it.

Gathering Information

Once you have a topic, you'll need things to say about it. This supporting material can include facts, ideas, examples, observations, sensory impressions, memories, and the like. Without the proper backup, papers lack force, vividness, and interest and may confuse or mislead readers. The more support you can gather, the easier it will be for you to write a draft. Time spent gathering information is never wasted.

3

Gather information to support your topic.

Strategies for Gathering Information

If you are writing on a familiar topic, much of your supporting material may come from your own head. Brainstorming is the best way to retrieve it. With unfamiliar topics, brainstorming won't work. Instead, you'll have to do some background reading. Whatever the topic, familiar or unfamiliar, talking with friends, parents, neighbors, or people knowledgeable about the topic can also produce useful ideas.

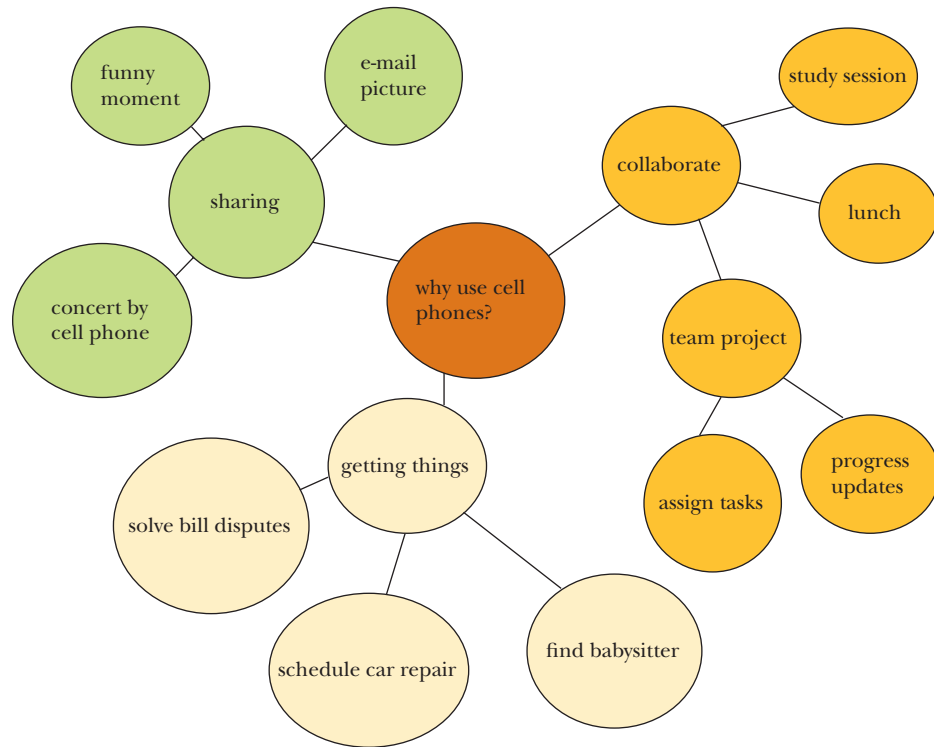
Brainstorming Brainstorming a topic, like brainstorming a subject, yields a set of words, fragments, and occasionally sentences that will furnish ideas for the paper. Drew has decided that he wants to demonstrate to professors and parents that there are good reasons for student cell phone use. He generated the following list through brainstorming:

students open cell phones after class	weather updates
coordinating life	sending e-mails
meeting friends for study sessions	sending pictures by e-mail
arranging a lunch date	holding up a phone at a concert
getting a ride	calling when something funny happens
coordinating a team project	keeping in touch
getting things done	old friends in different colleges
resolving bill disputes	boyfriends or girlfriends
scheduling car repairs	text messaging
finding babysitters	playing music

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

You can see how some thoughts have led to others. For example, the first jotting, “arranging a lunch date,” leads naturally to the next one, “getting a ride.” And “keeping in touch” leads to “old friends in different colleges.”

Branching is a helpful and convenient extension of brainstorming that allows you to add details to any item on your list. Here’s how you might use this technique to approach “cell phone use”:



Don’t worry if your brainstorming notes look chaotic and if some seem irrelevant. Sometimes the most unlikely material turns out to be the freshest and most interesting. As you organize and write your paper, you’ll probably combine, modify, and omit some of the notes, as well as add others. Drew decides from his brainstorming that “playing music,” “sending e-mails,” and “getting weather updates” are too specific to only a few kinds of cell phones and should not be part of his paper. There are now a number of brainstorming software programs such as the TheBrain and MindMeister that let you brainstorm on your computer on the Web, and even allow you to include images in your brainstorming. You can also use existing graphic programs on your computer.

Reading When you have to grapple with an unfamiliar topic, look in the library for material to develop it. Once you have a list of references, start searching for the books or articles. Look through each one you find and jot down information that looks useful, either as direct quotations or in your own words.

Whenever you use a direct quotation or rephrased material in your paper, you must give proper credit to the source. If you don't, you are guilty of plagiarism, a serious offense that can result in a failing grade for the course or even expulsion from college.

Talking with Others You can expand the pool of ideas gained through brainstorming or reading by talking with some of the people around you. Imagine you're writing a paper about a taxpayers' revolt in your state. After checking the leading state newspapers at the library, you find that most of the discontent centers on property taxes. You then decide to supplement what you've read by asking questions about the tax situation in your town.

Your parents and neighbors tell you that property taxes have jumped 50 percent in the last two years. The local tax assessor tells you that assessed valuations have risen sharply and that state law requires property taxes to keep pace. She also notes that this situation is causing some people on fixed incomes to lose their homes. A city council member explains that part of the added revenue is being used to repair city streets, build a new library wing, and buy more fire-fighting equipment. The rest is going to the schools. School officials tell you they're using their extra funds to offer more vocational courses and to expand the program for learning-disabled students. As you can see, asking questions can broaden your perspective and provide information that will help you to write a more worthwhile paper.

Social Media is a powerful tool for getting ideas and information.

- Post your issues and ideas on Facebook to get information and possible reading from friends.
- Conduct a survey using Facebook.
- E-mail friends, family, or even experts.
- Log on to discussion boards on the Internet.

Thinking Critically about Your Topic

As you begin to collect your ideas and information, you should think critically about some of the claims you are considering.

- Are you making assumptions that might be questioned? Is Drew exaggerating the usefulness of cell phones, perhaps overgeneralizing from a few incidents?
- How are your biases shaping your thinking? Is Drew's own extensive use of his cell phone forcing him to defend his behavior?
- Are there alternative ways to consider the topic or issue—in Drew's case, the ways the cell phone might shape the interactions, perhaps making them more frequent but less substantive? One useful strategy in

4

Think critically about your topic.

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

developing a paper is to brainstorm a position different from your own. For Drew that viewpoint might be the ways that cell phones disrupt social relationships and interfere with daily life. He might wish to imagine, in a positive fashion, what college life might be like without cell phones.

- Are there other experiences or evidence that you might wish to consider? Drew might have wished to talk to parents, looked at articles critical of cell phones, and talked to teachers to get a perspective that might challenge his view.

Thinking critically about your topic doesn't mean abandoning your topic. It does mean that you can approach your writing with your ideas tested, alternatives considered, and challenges ready to be addressed. It will make your position and your writing about that position stronger.

5

Organize and outline your paper.

Organizing the Information

If you have ever listened to a rambling speaker spill out ideas in no particular order, you probably found it hard to pay attention to the speech, let alone make sense of it. So, too, with disorganized writing. A garbled listing of ideas serves no one; an orderly presentation highlights your ideas and helps communication succeed.

Your topic determines the approach you take. In narrating a personal experience, such as a mishap-riddled vacation, you'd probably trace the events in the order they occurred. In describing a process, say caulking a bathtub, you'd take the reader step by step through the procedure. To describe a hillside view near your home, you might work from left to right. Or you could first paint a word picture of some striking central feature and then fan out in either direction. Other topics dictate other patterns, such as comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and illustration.

You can best organize long pieces of writing, such as library research papers, by following a formal outline. For shorter papers, however, a simple, informal system of *flexible notes* will do nicely.

The Flexible Notes System

To create a set of flexible notes, write each of your key points at the top of a separate page, computer file, or sheet of paper. If you have a thesis statement, refer to it for your key points. Next, list under each heading the supporting details that go with that heading. Drop details that don't fit and expand points that need more support. It can be handy to save each new page with a number, such as "topic3," so if you discover that you cut something useful, you can retrieve it. When your points are finished, arrange them in the order you expect to follow in your essay. Your computer allows you to readily pull material from different pages and even files onto a single page. Do not hesitate to cut and

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

paste to try out different organizational patterns. Drew's notes for the cell phone paper look like this:

Coordinating Activities

- Meeting friends for a study session
- Arranging a lunch date
- Getting a ride
- Coordinating a team project

Getting Things Done

- Resolving bill disputes
- Scheduling car repairs
- Finding babysitters

Sharing

- Sending pictures by e-mail
- Holding up phone at concert
- Call about something funny happening

Keeping in Touch

- Old friends in different colleges
- Boyfriends and girlfriends
- Text messaging

Since coordinating activities, getting things done, sharing, and keeping in touch are equivalent reasons, this listing arranges them according to their probable importance—starting with the most important reason from the point of view of the audience.

Now you're ready to draft a plan showing how many paragraphs you'll have in each part of the essay and what each paragraph will cover. Sometimes the number of details will suggest one paragraph; other times you'll need a paragraph block—two or more paragraphs. Here's a plan for Drew's cell phone essay:

Coordinating Activities

- Meeting for study session
- Arranging a lunch date
- Getting a ride
- Coordinating a team project

Getting Things Done

- Resolving bill disputes
- Scheduling car repairs
- Finding a babysitter

Sharing

- Sending pictures by e-mail
- Holding up phone at concert
- Calling about a funny event

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

Keeping in Touch

Old friends in different colleges

Boyfriends and girlfriends

Text messaging

} By voice

} By text

These groupings suggest one paragraph about coordinating activities, one about getting things done, one about sharing, and two about keeping in touch.

MyWritingLab

EXERCISE

Organize into flexible notes the supporting details that you prepared for the exercise in the section titled “Brainstorming.” Arrange your note pages in a logical sequence and draft a plan showing the number and content of the paragraphs in each section.

Creating an Outline

With longer essays or if it fits your organizational style, it can be helpful to develop an outline. An outline can show you how to organize and develop your paragraphs. In an outline, you organize your essay into major units using Roman numerals (I, II, III), letters (A, B, C), and numbers to show the structure you will use in the paper. Introductions and conclusions are not usually included in the outline. Most word processing programs have an outline function that lets you easily create an outline. In Word, you simply click on the outline icon in the bottom left of the page. There are two kinds of outlines. A topic outline simply states the main topic to be addressed in a section.

- I. Coordinating Activities
 - A. Meeting friends for study sessions
 - 1. Setting the time
 - 2. Making certain everyone gets there
 - B. Arranging a lunch date
 - 1. Deciding where everyone is meeting
 - 2. Arranging a ride to lunch
- II. Getting Things Done
 - A. Coordinating a team project
 - 1. Assign tasks
 - 2. Monitor progress
 - B. Resolving bill disputes
 - 1. Call during business hours

Topic outlines will quickly let you know if you have enough information for a paragraph. If under one major heading, you only have one letter or under a letter only one number, as in II B, you may need to do more brainstorming.

In a sentence outline, you make full statements or sentences that can often be used in your paper. A sentence outline makes you think about what you really want to say.

- I. Cell phones can be used to coordinate activities that would be otherwise difficult to coordinate given students’ busy schedules.

- A. Cell phones can help students find out where a study session is being held.
- B. Often there is a complex schedule of classes, work, meals, and meetings to organize.
- C. Cell phones can let members of a team project keep the project on track.

To develop your outline, you take your brainstorming or notes and mark the major units as I, II, III based on the main ideas they demonstrate. Then you start to develop your outline, identifying the major points for each major heading (I, II, ...) and the next major points (A, B, C). You can use your outline as a goad to additional planning as you see the holes. You should rarely have an A without a B or a 1 without a 2.

Developing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement presents the main idea of a piece of writing, usually in one sentence. The thesis statement points you in a specific direction, helping you to stay on track and out of tempting byways. In addition, it tells your reader what to expect.

Thesis statements can emerge at several points in the writing process. If an instructor assigns a controversial topic on which you hold strong views, the statement may pop into your head right away. At other times it may develop as you narrow a subject to a topic. Occasionally, you even have to write a preliminary draft to determine your main idea. Usually, though, the thesis statement emerges after you've gathered and examined your supporting information.

As you examine your information, search for the central point and the key points that back it up; then use these to develop your thesis statement. Converting the topic to a question may help you to uncover backup ideas and write a thesis statement.

For example:

Topic: The commercial advantages of computerized data storage systems.

Question: What advantages do computerized data storage systems offer business?

Thesis statement: Computerized data storage systems offer business enormous storage capacity, cheap, instant data transmission almost anywhere, and significantly increased profits.

The thesis statement stems from the specifics the student unearthed while answering the question.

Following are some key strategies that can help you develop a thesis statement.

- Identify your main topic.
- Review your notes or research and identify the specific, major claims you want to make about your topic.

6

Develop an effective thesis statement.

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

- Select those claims that will be the focus and organizational structure of the paper. You may need to outline first.
- Combine the major claim or claims with the topic in a statement that represents the main point of your paper.

Requirements of a Good Thesis Statement

Unless intended for a lengthy paper, a thesis statement focuses on just one central point or issue. Suppose you prepare the following thesis statement for a two- or three-page paper:

Centerville College should reexamine its policies on open admissions, vocational programs, and aid to students.

This sprawling statement would commit you to grapple with three separate issues. At best, you could make only a few general remarks about each one.

To correct matters, consider each issue carefully in light of how much it interests you and how much you know about it. Then make your choice and draft a narrower statement. The following thesis statement would do nicely for a brief paper. It shows clearly that the writer will focus on *just one issue*:

Because of the rising demand among high school graduates for job-related training, Centerville College should expand its vocational offerings

A good thesis statement also tailors the scope of the issue to the length of the paper. No writer could deal adequately with “Many first-year college students face crucial adjustment problems” in two or three pages. The idea is too broad to yield more than a smattering of poorly supported general statements. Paring it down to “Free time is a responsibility that challenges many first-year college students,” however, results in an idea that could probably be developed adequately.

A good thesis statement further provides an accurate forecast of what’s to come. If you plan to discuss the effects of overeating, don’t say, “Overeating stems from deep-seated psychological factors and the easy availability of convenience foods.” Such a statement, incorrectly suggesting that the paper will focus on causes, would only mislead and confuse your reader. On the other hand, “Overeating leads to obesity, which can cause or complicate several serious health problems” accurately represents what’s to follow.

Finally, a good thesis statement is precise, often previewing the organization of the paper. Assertions built on fuzzy, catchall words like *fascinating*, *bad*, *meaningful*, and *interesting*, or statements like “My paper is about ...” tell neither writer nor reader what’s going on. To illustrate:

- New York is a fascinating city.
- My paper is about no-fault divorce.
- The United States budget deficit is complex and involves the amount of revenue collected, discretionary and nondiscretionary spending, the long-term prospects of entitlement programs, as well as interest rates and the value of the dollar.
- In this paper I will discuss the dangers of texting.

Planning and Drafting Your Paper: Exploration

These examples raise a host of questions. Why does the writer find New York fascinating? Because of its skyscrapers? Its night life? Its theaters? Its restaurants? Its museums? Its shops? Its inhabitants? And what about no-fault divorce? Will the writer attack it, defend it, trace its history, or suggest ways of improving it? To find out, we must journey through the paper, hoping to find our way without a road-map sentence. How can the writer tackle all of these questions concerning the deficit without writing a book? What will actually be the focus? Besides starting with a cliché, we are left to wonder what kinds of danger of texting the writer is going to address.

Now look at the rewritten versions of those faulty thesis statements:

- New York's art museums offer visitors an opportunity to view a wide variety of great paintings.
- Compared to traditional divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes of marital breakdown.
- While currently the United States borrows money at historically low rates, the current deficit could easily be made worse by an increase in the rate for U.S. treasuries or a more general increase in interest rates.
- The evidence is clear. Texting while driving is almost as dangerous as drinking and driving.

These statements tell the reader not only what points the writer will make but also the order they will follow.

In brief, your thesis statement should

- Focus on just one central point or issue.
- Narrow the scope of the issue to what is manageable.
- Provide an accurate forecast of what is to come.
- Often preview the organization of the paper.

Your thesis statement should **not**

- Be too vague or general.
- Include more than you can reasonably manage in a paper.
- Suggest a different focus or organization than you follow in your paper.
- Use clichéd and excess wording like "In this paper I will discuss"

Omission of Thesis Statement

Not all papers have explicit thesis statements. Narratives and descriptions, for example, sometimes merely support some point that is unstated but nevertheless clear, and professional writers sometimes imply their thesis rather than state it openly. Nonetheless, a core idea underlies and controls all effective writing. Usually it is best to state that core idea in a thesis statement.

Changing Your Thesis Statement

Before your paper is in final form, you may need to change your thesis statement several times. If you draft the thesis statement during the narrowing stage, you