THE LONGMAN WRITER

JUDITH NADELL JOHN LANGAN COXWELL-TEAGUE TENTH EDITION

RHETORIC, READER, RESEARCH GUIDE, AND HANDBOOK



P Pearson

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The Longman Writer

Rhetoric, Reader, Research Guide, and Handbook

TENTH EDITION

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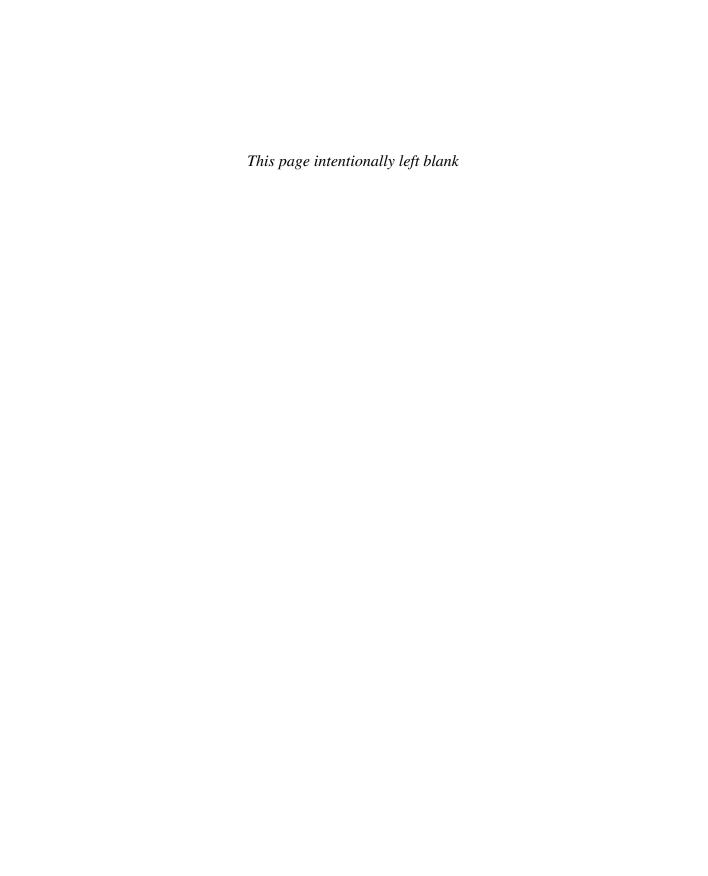
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Preface

The Longman Writer brings together equal parts product and process. We describe possible sequences and structures to stress the connection between reading and writing, and we emphasize that these steps and formats should be viewed as strategies, not rigid prescriptions, for helping students discover what works best for them. This flexibility ensures that The Longman Writer can fit a wide range of teaching philosophies and learning styles.

The Longman Writer includes everything that students and instructors need in a one- or twosemester, first-year composition course: (1) a comprehensive rhetoric, including chapters on each stage of the writing process and discussions of the essay exam and literary paper; (2) a reader with professional selections and student essays integrated into the rhetoric; (3) a research guide, with information on writing and properly documenting a research paper in both MLA and APA formats, including up-to-date guidelines based on the 8th edition of the MLA Handbook and the 6th edition of the APA Publication Manual; and (4) a concise, easy-to-use handbook. Throughout the text, we aim for a supportive, conversational tone that inspires students' confidence. Numerous activities and writing assignments-more than 500 in all-develop awareness of rhetorical choices and encourage students to explore a range of composing strategies.

What's New in the Tenth Edition

The tenth edition of *The Longman Writer* has been fully updated to provide helpful advice on academic writing, critical reading and thinking and the recursive stages of the writing process along with more in-depth coverage of the research process and new examples of student writing throughout.

An increased emphasis on academic writing is integrated into the chapters on the writing process

(Part II) and throughout the chapters on the patterns of development and the research essay (Parts III–IV), with more professional selections including MLA and APA in-text references and works cited or reference lists.

The importance of reading and thinking critically is emphasized throughout the text, beginning in Chapter 1, "Becoming a Critical Reader and Thinker." Each chapter teaches students how to think critically during the composing process, including tips for thinking critically about the sources they might integrate in their essays.

A revised section on the writing process (Chapters 2–9) clearly illustrates the recursive stages students will move through as they craft an essay. The eight chapters follow a new student essay through the composing process, showing writers what they need to do during each step—from the time they receive the assignment to the day they submit the final draft.

Revised chapters on the research essay incorporate the guidelines in the *MLA Handbook*, 8th edition.

A revised, more thorough treatment of plagiarism includes discussion of intentional and unintentional plagiarism and "patchwork writing."

More complete coverage on writing the research essay includes an annotated bibliography to accompany a new sample student research essay in both MLA and APA formats.

All new student essays—twelve in all—cover a range of subjects, from academic (review of a piece of art) to personal (relationships) to political (gender equality). Many of the new student essays are written using third-person point of view, integrated sources, and illustrations including photos, charts, and graphs.

New professional selections range from those written by Hillary Rodham Clinton ("Remarks to

the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women Plenary Session") to food columnist and TV personality Mark Bittman ("What Causes Weight Gain") to Chinese history professor Jeffrey M. Wasserstrom ("A Mickey Mouse Approach to Globalization").

The Book's Plan

Part I, "The Reading Process," provides guidance in a three-step process for text and images in which students learn the importance of developing critical reading skills.

Part II, "The Writing Process," takes students, step by step, through a multistage composing sequence. Each chapter presents a stage of the writing process and includes:

- Checklists that summarize key concepts and keep students focused on the essentials as they write.
- Diagrams that encapsulate the writing process, providing at-a-glance references as students compose their own essays.
- Activities that reinforce pivotal skills and involve students in writing from the start, showing them how to take their papers through successive stages in the composing process.

Part III, "The Patterns of Development," covers nine patterns: description, narration, illustration, division-classification, process analysis, comparisoncontrast, cause-effect, definition, and argumentation-persuasion. Each chapter contains a detailed explanation of the pattern, as well as the following:

- Checklists for prewriting and revising summarize key concepts and keep students focused on the essentials as they write.
- Diagrams encapsulate the patterns of development, providing at-a-glance references as students compose their own essays.
- Annotated student essays clearly illustrate each pattern of development. Commentary following each essay points out the blend of patterns in the paper and identifies both the paper's strengths and areas that need improvement.

- Prewriting and Revising Activities ask students
 to generate raw material for an essay, help
 them to see that the essay may include more
 than one pattern of development, and allow
 students to rework and strengthen paragraphs
 and examine and experiment with rhetorical
 options.
- Professional selections represent not only a specific pattern of development, but also showcase a variety of subjects, tones, and points of view. Extensive apparatus accompanies each professional selection.
 - Biographical notes provide background on every professional author and create an interest in each piece of writing.
 - Pre-Reading Journal Entries prime students for each professional selection by encouraging them to explore their thoughts about an issue.
 - Diagrams outline the structure of professional readings and provide students with an easy reference for identifying each pattern of development.
 - Questions for Critical Reading help students to interpret each selection, while Questions About the Writer's Craft ask students to analyze a writer's use of patterns.
 - Writing Assignments ask students to write essays using the same pattern as in the selection, to write essays that include other patterns, and to conduct research.
- End-of-chapter General Assignments, Assignments
 Using Multimedia, and Assignments with a Specific
 Purpose, Audience, and Point of View provide open ended topics for students to explore and applications of rhetorical context to real-world settings.

Part IV, "The Research Essay," discusses how to locate, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, integrate, and document electronic and print sources for a research paper and includes the following:

 Checklists summarize key concepts and keep students focused on essentials as they select a research topic, evaluate sources, write and revise a research essay, and create their bibliography.

- Source Samples provide concrete examples of how students can locate all the necessary components of an MLA citation by presenting the actual source and its corresponding citation.
- Activities ensure mastery of key research skills.

Part V, "The Literary Essay and Essay Exam," shows students how to adapt the composing process to fit the requirements of two highly specific writing situations.

Part VI, "A Concise Handbook," provides easy-tograsp explanations of the most troublesome areas of grammar, punctuation, and spelling that students encounter.

Marginal icons alert students and instructors to unique elements of this book:

- In Part II, student writing in progress is indicated with ...
- In Part III, assignments that are conducive to using the library or Internet are indicated with
- In Parts II–V, ethical issues are indicated with
- In Parts II, III, and V, combined patterns of development are indicated with .

Supplements

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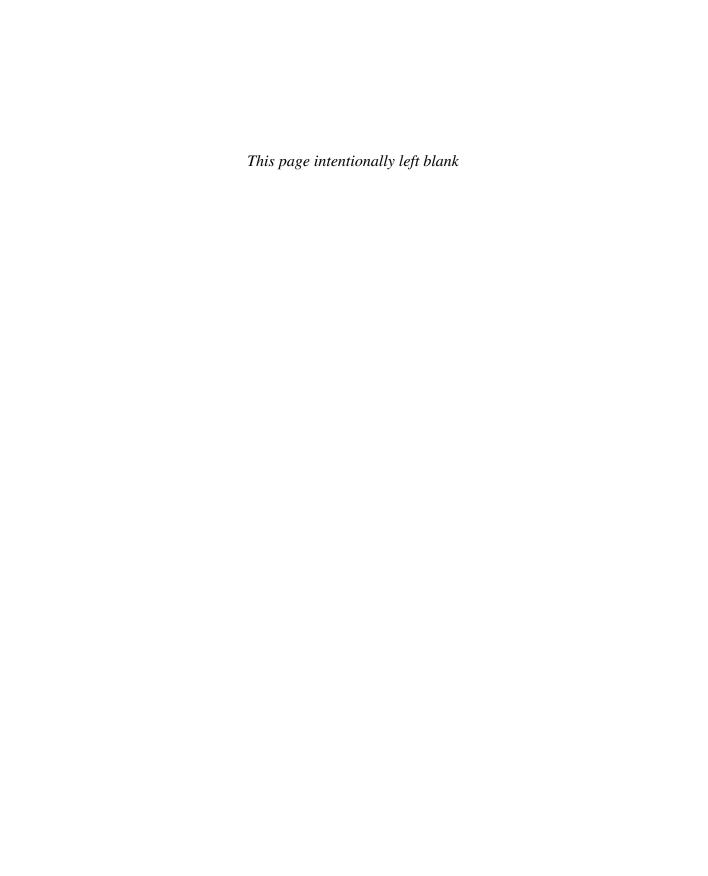
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Judith Nadell John Langan



Chapter 1

Becoming a Critical Reader and Thinker



Learning Objectives

- **1.1** Read, annotate, and critically evaluate texts.
- **1.2** Read, annotate, and critically evaluate visuals.



Thy don't more people delight in reading? After all, most children feel great pleasure and pride when they first learn to read. As children grow older, though, the initially magical world of books is increasingly associated with homework, tests, and grades. Reading can turn into an anxiety-producing chore. No wonder some people end up avoiding it.

Nevertheless, people with this kind of negative experience can still find reading gratifying and enjoyable. The key is to be an active participant as a reader. Even a slick best seller requires the reader to decode and interpret what's on the page. In addition, many readings include visuals—images and graphics—that need to be explored and evaluated. Effective reading takes a little work, but the satisfactions of reading, whether for pleasure or information, more than reward any effort involved.

As a college student, you are expected to think critically about the words and images you read. You need to adopt a questioning attitude and interact with the ideas presented in the text. As you read, make a habit of asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the text?
- How is it organized?
- Who is the author, and what are his or her credentials?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How is the text structured?

Asking yourself these questions will help you become an active reader rather than a passive one.

Also keep in mind that you will encounter difficult texts that require more than one reading. Not understanding a text the first time you read it doesn't mean that you're not smart or not a "good reader." Don't give up if you read a passage and don't understand what you've read. That happens to all college students. Texts that present unfamiliar ideas and those that use complex, seemingly convoluted sentence structures quite often require repeated reading. So do texts that use vocabulary you don't understand. Instead of becoming frustrated and giving up when you don't understand a passage, realize that you need to check the meaning of unfamiliar words and read the passage again. When you make a little extra effort, the ideas in the text will begin to make sense to you.

Reading, Annotating, and Critically **Evaluating Texts**

1.1 Read, annotate, and critically evaluate texts.

The three-stage approach discussed in the following sections will help you get the most out of the readings in this book as well as any other readings, including those with visual aids. See in particular the checklists that follow each stage, and use them each time you read.

Stage 1: Get an Overview of the Selection

Ideally, you should get settled in a quiet place that encourages concentration. If you can focus your attention while sprawled on a bed or curled up in a chair, that's fine. But if you find that being too comfortable is more conducive to daydreaming and dozing off than it is to studying, sit at a desk or table instead. If you're reading on a computer screen, tablet, or e-book reader, make sure you've adjusted the type size, font, and other features so that you're comfortable.

Once you're settled, it's time to read the selection. To ensure a good first reading, try the following hints.

V	First Reading: A Checklist
	Get an overview of the essay and its author. Start by checking out the author's credentials. If a biographical note precedes the selection, as in this book, you'll want to read it for background information that will help you critically evaluate the writer's credibility as well as his or her slant on the subject. For other materials, do a computer search for information on the author and the publication or website where the reading appears.
	Consider the title. A good title often expresses the selection's main idea, giving you insight into the selection even before you read it.
	Read the selection straight through purely for pleasure. Allow yourself to be drawn into the world the author has created. Because you bring your own experiences and viewpoints to the piece, your reading will be unique.
	If a reading has visual aids, ask yourself the following questions, which will help you think critically about what you're seeing: Who created the visual? Is the source reliable? What does the caption say? If the visual is an image (such as a photograph), what general mood, feeling, or other impression does it convey? If it is a graphic (such as a graph or chart), is information clearly labeled and presented?
	After this initial reading of the selection, briefly describe the piece and your reaction to it.

Stage 2: Deepen Your Sense of the Selection

At this point, you're ready to move more deeply into the selection and to think more critically about it. A second reading will help you identify the specific features that triggered your initial reaction.

You can use several techniques during this second, more focused reading. Mortimer Adler, a well-known writer and editor, argued passionately for marking up the material we read. The physical act of annotating, he believed, etches the writer's ideas more sharply in the mind, helping readers grasp and remember those ideas more easily. Adler also described various annotation techniques he used when reading. The following checklist presents several of these techniques, adapted somewhat to reflect our critical reading of both print and digital texts.

▼ Second Reading: A Checklist

g a pen (or pencil) and highlighter for print texts—or digital commenting and highlighting ires if you're reading online—you might
Underline or highlight the selection's main idea, or <i>thesis</i> , often found near the beginning or end. If the thesis isn't stated explicitly, write down your own version of the selection's main idea. If you're reading the selection online, you might add a digital sticky note or comment with your version of the thesis.
Locate the main supporting evidence used to develop the thesis. Number the key supporting points by writing in the margin or adding digital sticky notes.
Circle or put an asterisk next to key ideas that are stated more than once.
Take a minute to write "Yes" or "No" or to insert these comments digitally beside points with which you strongly agree or disagree. Your critical reaction to these points often explains your feelings about the selection's key ideas.
Return to any unclear passages you encountered during the first reading. The feeling you now have for the piece as a whole will probably help you make sense of initially confusing spots. You may find yourself able to make <i>inferences</i> that you were unable to make during the first reading, making connections and "reading between the lines" in a way that you were not able to do earlier. You may also be able to use <i>context clues</i> to determine the meanings of some words you weren't sure you understood the first time you read the passage. As you think critically about the selection, you may also discover that the writer's thinking isn't as clear as it could be.
Use a print or online dictionary to check the meanings of any words of whose meaning you're unsure.
Take some quick notes about any visuals. If you're reading online, you might choose to make digital comments. As you think critically about the visuals, ask yourself the following questions: What is the author's purpose? Do the images tell a story? Do they make assumptions about viewers' beliefs or knowledge? What elements stand out? How do the colors and composition (arrangement of elements) work to convey an impression? Are any graphs and similar visuals adequately discussed in the text? Is the information current and presented without distortion? Is it relevant to the text discussion?
If your initial impression of the selection has changed in any way, try to determine why you reacted differently on this reading.

Stage 3: Critically Evaluate the Selection

Now that you have a good grasp of the selection, you may want to read it a third time, especially if the piece is long or complex. This time, your goal is to make critical judgments about the selection's effectiveness. Keep in mind, though, that you shouldn't evaluate the selection until after you have a strong hold on it. Whether positive or negative, any reaction is valid only if it's based on an accurate reading.

To evaluate the selection, ask yourself the following questions.

V	Critically Evaluating a Selection: A Checklist
	Where does support for the selection's thesis seem logical and sufficient? Where does support seem weak? Which of the author's supporting facts, arguments, and examples seem pertinent and convincing? Which don't?
	Is the selection unified? If not, why not? Where are there any unnecessary digressions or detours?
	How does the writer make the selection move smoothly from beginning to end? Are any parts of the selection abrupt and jarring? Which ones?
	Which stylistic devices are used to good effect in the selection? How do paragraph development, sentence structure, word choice (diction), and tone contribute to the piece's overall effect? Where does the writer use figures of speech effectively?
	How do any visuals improve the reading and support the writer's main points? Are the visuals adequately discussed in the text? Are images such as photos thought-provoking without being sensationalistic? Do graphs and similar visual aids provide relevant, persuasive details?
	How does the selection encourage further thought? What new perspective on an issue does the writer provide? What ideas has the selection prompted you to explore in an essay of your own?

Critically Assessing Visuals in a Reading

1.2 Read, annotate, and critically evaluate visuals.

Writers may use visuals—images and graphics—to help convey their message. You can incorporate your critical "reading" of these visuals into the three-stage process you use for reading a text: In stage 1, preview the visuals at the same time that you get an overview of the text. In stage 2, analyze and interpret the visuals as a means of deepening your sense of the reading. Finally, in stage 3, evaluate the visuals as part of your evaluation of the entire selection.

Some common visual aids you are likely to see are listed in the table below. Following this list are two examples of critical assessment using the three-stage process.

Illustrations

 Photographs, paintings, drawings, and prints 	Illustrate a particular scene, time period, activity, event, idea, or person.
Cartoons and comics	May make a joke, comment on a situation, or tell a story.
Graphics	
• Tables	Use columns and rows to present information, especially specific numbers, concisely.
Bar graphs	Use rectangular bars of different sizes to compare information about two or more items.
 Line graphs 	Use horizontal lines moving from point to point to show changes over time.
Pie charts	Use a circle divided into wedges to show proportions.
Charts and diagrams	Use different shapes and lines to show flow of information, organization of a group, layouts such as room plans, or assembly instructions.
 Maps 	Present information by geographical location.

Photos, paintings, and similar illustrations may appear in webpages, periodicals, books, and advertisements. Graphics regularly appear in academic, technical, and business writing. You can critically evaluate all these visuals just as you would print text.

Critically Assessing an Image: An Example

Suppose a reading aims to persuade readers that the international community must set up an organization that stands ready to implement an immediate and coordinated response to natural disasters, no matter where they occur. The reading includes a photo (shown here) taken in the aftermath of the magnitude 7.5 Hindu Kush earthquake that hit South Asia on October 26, 2015. How can we critically evaluate this image and its effectiveness?

- **1. Previewing the photo.** If we saw that the photo was found at *Time* magazine online and was taken by a photographer for the Associated Press (AP), we could assume that both are reliable sources that we could trust. As we preview the photo, we would see that the author of the selection has written a caption that clearly explains the image, and the phrase *Using whatever implements are at their disposal* supports the author's point that an immediate response is needed. We also notice, however, that the caption uses strong language: *catastrophic* and *devastated*. Information in the reading would have to support the use of these terms as it explains the extent of the damage caused by this powerful earthquake. Still, our first response to the photo would be one of sympathy and compassion for the people of South Asia.
- **2.** Critically analyzing and interpreting the photo. The photo tells a story of people coming together to help one another in the aftermath of the earthquake. The elements in the photo are arranged so that we first see people in the foreground,



Using whatever implements are at their disposal, individuals search through the rubble that resulted from the catastrophic Hindu Kush earthquake that devastated parts of South Asia on October 26, 2015.

blanketed in dark shadows, and others in the background, standing in sunlight. Then we see piles of rubble from the remains of the crumbled structure and what is left of whitewashed walls, some bathed in sunlight, with blue sky overhead. We realize that this pile of rubble might have been the home of one or more of the individuals we see in the photo, and we wonder if they are searching for missing family members. Now we begin to understand the scope of the devastation. We can see both determination and a sense of disbelief in the people's faces as they cope with the disaster. We sympathize with their plight as they go about the urgent task of finding what might be buried in the rubble.

3. Critically evaluating the photo. The photo powerfully illustrates the scale of the work facing South Asia and the probable inadequacy of the people's resources. The contrast between the destroyed building and the determined workers conveys a sense of the hopefulness of the human spirit even in dire situations. Many readers will feel an emotional response to these people, will see that they need help, and will want to help them. The photo and caption together, therefore, successfully support the idea that some countries may not have the means to cope effectively with huge natural disasters. The text of the reading will have to convince the reader that setting up an international organization to coordinate responses to these crises is the right solution.

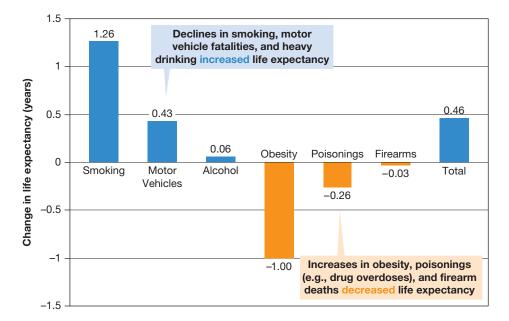
Critically Assessing a Graph: An Example

Imagine that a reading's purpose is to show how changes in behavior have affected the health of the U.S. population since 1960. The article includes the bar graph in Figure 1.1. How can we approach this graphic element and assess its usefulness to the reader?

- 1. Previewing the graph. We see right away that the authors have created a bar graph that shows the effects on life expectancy of six changes in behavior (smoking, motor vehicle fatalities, heavy drinking, obesity, poisonings, and firearm deaths) from 1960 to 2010. The graph is clearly labeled, and a full caption tells us that the information is from reliable sources—the National Health Interview Survey and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.
- 2. Critically analyzing and interpreting the graph. The source's date tells us that the information is not only reliable but also current. The graph clearly shows that declines in smoking and increases in obesity are the two factors that have had the greatest impact on changes in life expectancy, while decreases in motor vehicle fatalities and increases in poisonings have played less dramatic roles. We also see that slight decreases in heavy drinking and slight increases in firearm deaths have affected life expectancy. What we can't determine from analyzing the graph is the role that various factors played in the increases and decreases shown. For example, we don't know whether the significant decrease in the number of motor vehicle fatalities can be attributed to safer driving habits or to improvements in air bags, safer roads, and enforcement of seat belt laws. We can conclude, however, that

The Impact of Behavioral Changes on Life Expectancy, 1960–2010

SOURCE: Figure by Courtney Coile, summarizing research by Susan Stewart and David Cutler. "How Behavioral Changes Have Affected U.S. Population Health Since 1960." National Bureau of Economic Research Bulletin on Aging and Health (1): 1-2.



while some changes in Americans' behavior have resulted in longer life expectancies (decreases in smoking, motor vehicle fatalities, and heavy drinking), other behaviors (obesity, poisonings, and firearm deaths) have had the opposite effect, with an overall increase of .046 years in life expectancy between 1960 and 2010.

3. Critically evaluating the graph. Without being sensationalistic, the graph is striking. It effectively dramatizes the point that behavior plays a major role in life expectancy. The bar graph shows that while Americans are moving in the right direction with fewer of us smoking, being killed in vehicle accidents, and drinking heavily, an increasing number of us are obese, and more of us are dying from poisonings and being shot by firearms.

A Model Annotated Reading

To illustrate the multi-stage reading process, we've annotated the professional essay that follows: Larry Rosen's "Our Obsessive Relationship with Technology." As you read Rosen's essay, try applying the three-stage sequence. You can measure your ability to dig into the selection by making your own annotations on Rosen's essay and then comparing them with ours. You can also see how well you evaluated the piece by answering the questions in "Critically Evaluating a Selection: A Checklist" on page 5 and then comparing your responses with ours on pages 12–13.

LARRY ROSEN

Professor of Psychology at California State University, Larry Rosen is considered an expert in the psychology of technology. His major areas of research include the impacts of multitasking, social networking, and texting. He has been a commentator on Good Morning America, NPR, and CNN, and he has been quoted widely in a variety of publications including USA Today, The New York Times, and Newsweek.

Pre-Reading Journal Entry

Technology is often blamed for having harmful effects. Do you think this criticism is merited? In what ways does technology in general, or a specific kind of technology that especially interests you, exert a negative influence? In what ways does it exert a positive influence? Take a few minutes to respond to these questions in your journal.

Our Obsessive Relationship with Technology

I am an inveterate people watcher, which is probably why I started college thinking that I was going to be a math teacher and ended up getting my degrees in psychology. For the past 30+ years, as I have studied the "psychology of technology," I have always taken a strongly positive view about the impact it has on our culture, and all of my writing has been in service of seeing how we can make the most of these marvelous inventions. From the beginnings of the Internet, to the rapid rise of the WWW, laptops, smartphones, tablets and more, we now have the world at our fingertips whenever we want and wher-

ever we might find ourselves.

Lately, however, I have witnessed something that profoundly troubles me. WE CAN'T SEEM TO KEEP OUR FACES OUT OF OUR SMARTPHONES FOR EVEN A MIN-UTE OR TWO. Some people call it an addiction. Others call it an obsession. But, there is an important difference between the two. Addiction means that you are trying to get your brain to release neurotransmitters that we have learned signal a pleasurable experience. Obsession also involves neurotransmitters, but those chemicals are associated with symptoms of stress and anxiety. When we are addicted to something, we strive for the pleasure it brings. When we are obsessed with something, we strive to reduce the anxiety molecules in our brain. Personally, I think that our constant obsession with technology—obsession being an anxiety-based disorder—is mostly about reducing anxiety and very little about gaining pleasure. Just as Jack Nicholson kept doing repetitive activities in As Good As It Gets, we seem to be doing the same with our smartphones.

Using a casual tone, Rosen establishes his credentials and shares his positive view of the overall effects of technology.

Transition from Rosen's overall positive view of effects of technology to his concerns about our relationships with our smartphones.

Rosen explores the difference between an "obsession" and an "addiction."

Author establishes thesis: We are obsessed with-not addicted to—technology.

Brief real-life examples and observations support thesis

More examples, observations, and reflections

Additional personal examples, observations, and reflections that support the thesis

Personal observation and reflection that supports thesis

Additional personal observations and reflections that support the thesis

For example, how many times have you seen someone pat their pocket and smile, having been reassured that their phone was still safely nestled close at hand? How often have you experienced "phantom pocket vibrations" where you felt a tingling near your pocket area—or wherever you keep your phone—only to discover that rather than the alert or notification you "thought" you just received, what you felt was just some neurons near the surface of your skin randomly firing? A few years ago I would have just reached down and scratched that itch. Now I am supremely disappointed that it is only an itch.

Walking around Times Square on vacation, I could not find one person who was not gazing into a phone, even those who were traveling with others. My friends around the world tell me that they see the same behaviors. The other day in the dining room at my campus, I watched a young woman eating lunch with her supervisor pick up her phone while he was talking and check her email. And the more interesting part is that he kept on talking to her and didn't seem slighted at all.

Last summer I took a road trip with my youngest daughter and visited some of the most beautiful scenery in the US, traversing four western national parks. One day we hiked all the way up to Inspiration Point, only to find that since there was a cell tower up there, nearly every hiker was looking down rather than out at the magnificent vista. And those who were looking were busily snapping pictures instead of simply looking and experiencing the magnificent views. I doubt whether they can have the same experience of nature through that small lens. Will those who were taking videos get the same enjoyment by reliving the views rather than experiencing them? Will they even watch those videos again?

Another interesting and somewhat troubling observation is that many young people, and a lot of older ones too, carry their phone in their hand. I often ask them why and the answer is always the same: "So I know immediately when I get a text or an email or someone posts on social media." I guess taking a second or two to take that phone out of a pocket or purse is not soon enough in our tech-rich world.

And I find it amusing (and somewhat disconcerting) that people make excuses to escape whoever they are supposed to be spending time with so that they can check in with other people who may not even be real-life friends. I like going out to dinner with friends and am bewildered at how many people put their phone on the table, and if it vibrates, they interrupt whatever is going on to tap a few keys and return to the conversation often asking, "What did I miss?" Some people call this FOMO—Fear of Missing Out—but by choosing to not miss

Rosen makes a general reference to research findings that support his thesis.

Specific source of information?

Author returns to the view of technology shared in first introductory paragraph.

Rosen looks to the future, shares his concerns, and ends on a positive note. out on their virtual social world they are missing out on their real social world right in front of their face.

Another view of our obsession is evident as bedtime nears. People use their phones right up until they turn out the lights, even though all of the research shows that this leads to suppression of melatonin and difficulty sleeping. Three fourths of teens and young adults sleep with their phone next to their bed, either with the sound on or on vibrate, and awaken several times a night to check incoming alerts. This disrupts our sleep cycle, which then impairs the all-important processes that our brain requires for its nightly housekeeping.

I am still a believer in the major benefits technology brings to our world, but I sincerely hope that what we are seeing is just another pendulum swing where we become so excited about something new that we want to use it obsessively, and as time passes we become less captivated and use it less often until the next new thing comes into our world and the pendulum swings again. But the observer in me shakes his head and wonders whether the pendulum has reached its apex yet and, if not, what that will do to our relationship with the world and the "real" people who inhabit it. I remain optimistic.

Thesis: After providing background information in the opening paragraph and exploring the difference between the meanings of the words *addiction* and *obsession* in paragraph 2, Rosen states his thesis close to the end of the second paragraph: "Personally, I think that our constant obsession with technology—obsession being an anxiety-based disorder—is mostly about reducing anxiety and very little about gaining pleasure."

First Reading: Rosen provides a quick take on a potentially serious subject to which most readers can relate. His informal tone and use of extensive examples get to the heart of the technology-as-obsession issue.

Second and Third Readings:

- 1. In addition to including responses from various individuals regarding their use of smartphones, as well as a reference to research that has been conducted, Rosen uses a number of personal examples, observations, and reflections to illustrate our widespread obsessive relationship with smartphones.
- 2. Rosen uses *illustration* with his extensive use of examples to support his thesis. He also uses both *comparison/contrast* and *definition* in his explanation of the difference between the terms *addiction* and *obsession*, along with description and narration in the various examples he includes.
- 3. While the essay succeeds overall, Rosen could have made a stronger case for his thesis if he had included references to specific research. In paragraph 8, he refers to "all of the research." What specific research?
- 4. At first, the ending might seem weak with the closing statement: "I remain optimistic." But after a second reading, it becomes clear that in his conclusion, Rosen is returning to an idea in the introduction regarding his positive view of technology's impact on our culture. He brings his essay to closure by returning to that idea and making clear that

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despite his concern with our obsessive relationship with smartphones, he is hopeful that as time passes we will "become less captivated" with our new technology.

The following questions and answers will help crystallize your reaction to Rosen's essay.

- 1. Where does support for the selection's thesis seem logical and sufficient? Where does support seem weak? Rosen begins to provide evidence for his thesis in his description of people keeping their smartphones in their pockets so they can feel them vibrate (paragraph 3). He further buoys his thesis with examples of the crowd in Times Square, all on their phones (4); a young woman on her phone while at lunch with her supervisor (4); and hikers in a national park who are attached to their phones (5). Rosen also uses general examples from others, including his "friends around the world" (4), nameless young and older people he questions (6), friends with whom he goes out to dinner (7), and research in general (8). However, his support would be stronger if he included specific references to research from other reputable sources to support his thesis.
- 2. Is the selection unified? If not, why not? In the first two paragraphs, Rosen provides background information to establish his credentials and state his thesis. However, after stating his thesis near the end of the second paragraph, he includes what could be considered a distracting and puzzling reference to As Good As It Gets, a film starring Jack Nicholson. Rosen seems to assume that his audience is familiar with the film and will understand the connection he makes between the film's main character and his thesis. He then provides numerous examples in paragraphs 3-8 to convince his readers that many of us are truly obsessed with technology and that our obsession is " ... mostly about reducing anxiety and very little about gaining pleasure" (paragraph 2). In the concluding paragraph, Rosen returns to an idea he stated in the introduction regarding his overall positive view of technology, but he adds that he wonders how our obsession with technology will affect "our relationship with the world and the 'real' people who inhabit it."
- 3. How does the writer make the selection move smoothly from beginning to end? The first two paragraphs of Rosen's essay are clearly connected. The phrase Lately, however at the beginning of the second paragraph signals the reader that Rosen is about to contrast the ideas in the preceding paragraph with those to come. While his reference at the end of the second paragraph to a film with which some readers might not be familiar could be distracting, Rosen gets back on course at the beginning of the third paragraph. He uses the phrase For example to let readers know he is about to provide evidence to support his thesis. Then at the beginning of paragraphs 6-8, Rosen uses the connecting words Another and And to move readers smoothly along from one example to another and then to the essay's conclusion.
- 4. Which stylistic devices are used to good effect in the selection? Rosen uses several patterns of development in his essay. The selection as a whole illustrates the obsession many individuals have with technology. In the two introductory paragraphs, Rosen contrasts his overall positive view of the effects of technology with his concerns about the constant need to have smartphones available at all times. In the second paragraph he compares and contrasts the terms addiction and obsession, and he also defines each term. Then in paragraphs 3-8, Rosen provides one example after another to provide support for his thesis, using both description and narration in the various examples. In the closing paragraph he compares his overall positive view of technology with his concerns about possible negative effects of our obsession. Throughout, Rosen's informal, conversational tone draws



readers in as he provides examples to which most readers can relate. These varied stylistic devices help make the essay a quick, easy read. Finally, although Rosen is concerned about possible negative effects of our obsession with technology, he lightens his essay by ending on a positive note: "I remain optimistic."

5. How does the selection encourage further thought? Rosen's essay focuses on an issue with which many, perhaps most, individuals can identify: smartphone obsession. His main concern is that our need to stay connected at all times could lead to negative effects on "our relationship with the world and the 'real' people who inhabit it" (paragraph 9). His presentation on the issue urges us to think more seriously about our obsession with technology and its possible negative effects on our lives.

Following are some sample questions and writing assignments based on the Rosen essay; all are similar to the sort that appear later in this book.

Questions for Critical Reading

- 1. According to Rosen, what is the difference between an *addiction* and an *obsession*? What reasons does he give for describing the relationship many individuals have with technology as an *obsession* rather than an *addiction*?
- 2. What does the acronym *FOMO* stand for, and what are Rosen's concerns about individuals who have this phobia?

Questions About the Writer's Craft

- 1. What kind of audience do you think Rosen is writing for? What clues does he provide in his essay that make you think he is writing for that audience?
- 2. Rosen uses numerous examples to convince his readers that many of us have a problematic relationship with technology. Which of his examples stands out to you as the most effective at proving his thesis, and why?

Writing Assignments

- 1. While stating his overall view that the effects of technology are positive, Rosen focuses his essay on the negative aspects of what he refers to as our *obsession* with technology. Write an essay in which you focus on the positive aspects of a particular technology such as smartphones or a social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Like Rosen, write using first-person point of view and incorporate examples from your own (and others') experiences to support your thesis.
- 2. Using first-person point of view and numerous personal examples, Rosen crafts an essay in which he shares his concerns about our obsessive relationship with technology. Write an essay in which you share similar or related concerns of your own. For example, you might write about possible negative effects of social networking sites, video games, or texting. Instead of writing in first person as Rosen does, use the third-person point of view. Consider including several outside sources to strengthen the effectiveness of your essay, and be sure to correctly document your sources.

Chapter 2

Getting Started Through Prewriting



Learning Objectives

- **2.1** Use prewriting to generate ideas before composing a first draft.
- **2.2** Organize your ideas into a scratch outline that will make the writing process more manageable.



ow do you typically react when a college instructor assigns an essay? Are you so excited that you can hardly wait to get started? Perhaps you are—if Lyou are lucky enough to immediately think of what you want to say and how you want to say it. But for many people, putting pen or pencil to paper—or fingers to keyboard—is a little scary.

When you write, you put what's going on in your brain—your innermost thoughts—down for others to see. If they read what you've written and react positively (perhaps with a comment such as "Wow! You are an amazing writer!"), you feel wonderful. That reaction makes you feel validated as a student, as a thinker, and as a writer. But if your early drafts need a lot of improvement, don't despair. Imperfect early drafts don't mean that you're not smart or not a good writer. They do mean that, more often than not, writing is hard work, and the words don't simply pour perfectly and effortlessly out of your brain and onto the page or screen. Although your final draft will be engaging, interesting, and polished, chances are that your writing did not start out that way. Writing truly is a process, and you need to think carefully about the steps that will lead to a final draft that you are proud to share with your audience.

In this chapter and following chapters, we describe a sequence of steps (that is, a process) for writing essays. Familiarity with this sequence develops your awareness of strategies and choices, increasing your confidence when you write. You're less likely to look at a blank piece of paper and think, "Help! Now what do I do?" During the process, you do the following:

- Prewrite
- Identify your thesis
- Support the thesis with evidence
- Organize the evidence
- Write the paragraphs of the first draft
- Revise meaning, structure, and paragraph development
- Revise sentences and words
- Edit and proofread

We present the sequence as a series of steps, but we urge you not to view it as a formula that you must follow rigidly. Most people develop personalized approaches to the writing process. Some writers mull over a topic in their heads and then move quickly into a promising first draft; others outline their essays in detail before beginning to write. Between these two extremes are many effective approaches. The sequence here—illustrated in Figure 2.1—can be streamlined or otherwise altered to fit individual writing styles as well as the needs of specific assignments. You'll find that this sequence can help you not only as you compose essays for your English classes but also when you're composing in other genres (forms of writing) in your college courses and beyond.

Use Prewriting to Get Started

2.1 Use prewriting to generate ideas before composing a first draft.

Prewriting refers to strategies you can use to generate ideas *before* starting the first draft of a paper. (See Figure 2.1.) Because prewriting techniques encourage imaginative exploration, they also help you discover what interests you most about your subject. Having such a focus early in the writing process keeps you from plunging into your initial draft without first giving some thought to what you want to say. Prewriting thus saves you time in the long run by keeping you on course.

Prewriting can help in other ways, too. When we write, we often sabotage our ability to generate material because we continually critique what we put down on paper. During prewriting, you deliberately ignore your internal critic. Your purpose is simply to get ideas down on paper or on a computer screen without evaluating them.

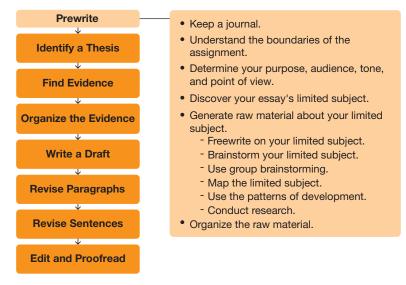
One final advantage of prewriting: The random associations typical of prewriting tap the mind's ability to make unusual connections. You may stumble upon an interesting idea. Prewriting helps you appreciate—right from the start—this element of surprise in the writing process.

Keep a Journal

Of all the prewriting techniques, keeping a **journal** (daily or almost daily) is the one most likely to make writing a part of your life. No matter what format your journal takes—notebook or computer file—be sure to date all entries.

Some journal entries focus on a single theme; others wander from topic to topic. Your starting point may be a dream, a conversation, a video on YouTube, a political

Figure 2.1 Process Diagram: Prewriting



cartoon, an issue raised in class or in your reading—anything that surprises, interests, angers, depresses, confuses, or amuses you. You may also use a journal to experiment with your writing style—say, to vary your sentence structure if you tend to use predictable patterns.

Here is a fairly focused excerpt from a student's journal:

Mom and Dad will be in town again this weekend for the football game, like they were last weekend and two weekends before that. I'm beginning to wonder if I made a smart choice when I made the decision to attend college here. I knew, of course, that Mom went to college here and that they brought me to lots of the games here while I was growing up. I loved that. But somehow I didn't realize that once I was a student here and they came up for the games, they would expect me to spend all weekend with them. At first it was fine. They took me shopping and out for great food, much better than what I eat on campus every day. And I'll admit I missed them when I first left home. And the fact that I'm an only child probably makes them miss me more than they would if there were other kids still at home with them. I understand all of that. But now I've made friends here and there's so much going on that I'm missing out on when Mom and Dad are around. Now they're talking about buying a three-bedroom condo here where I could live with a roommate and they could stay when they're in town visiting. This is not going the way I want it to go, and I don't know what to do. I don't want to hurt them. They love me. They miss me. They've done so much for me. But I know this situation is only going to get worse if I don't figure something out soon. (October 28)

The journal is a place for you to get in touch with the writer inside you. Although some instructors collect students' journals—done in notebooks or through an online course management system or a blog set up for the class—you needn't be overly concerned with spelling, grammar, sentence structure, or organization, unless your instructor tells you otherwise. Although journal writing is typically more structured than freewriting (discussed later in this chapter), you usually don't have to strive for entries that read like mini-essays. In fact, sometimes you may find it helpful to use a simple list to record your thoughts. The important thing is to use your journal to stimulate reflection and new insights that provide you with material to use in your writing. For this reason, it is a good idea to reread each week's entries to identify recurring themes and concerns. Keep a list of these issues at the back of your journal, under a heading such as "Possible Essay Subjects." For instance, here are a few topics suggested by the preceding journal entry: deciding which college to attend, leaving home, being an only child. Each of these topics could be developed into a full-length essay.

The Pre-Reading Journal Entry

To reinforce the value of journal writing, we've included a journal assignment before each reading selection in this book. This assignment, called Pre-Reading Journal Entry, encourages you to explore—in a tentative fashion—your thoughts about an issue that will be raised in the selection. Here, once again, is the

Pre-Reading Journal Entry assignment that precedes Larry Rosen's "Our Obsessive Relationship with Technology":

Technology is often blamed for having harmful effects. Do you think this criticism is merited? In what ways does technology in general, or a specific technology that especially interests you, exert a negative influence? In what ways does it exert a positive influence? Take a few minutes to respond to these questions in your journal.

The following journal entry shows how one student, Caylah Francis, responded to the journal assignment. An eighteen-year-old college student with two younger brothers who spend hours each week playing video games, Caylah was intrigued by the journal assignment; she decided to focus her journal entry on the negative and positive effects of playing video games. Caylah used a listing strategy to prepare her journal entry. She found that lists were perfect for dealing with the essentially "for or against" nature of the journal assignment:

Video Game	s' Negative	Influence	on Kids
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Teaches negative behaviors (violence, sex, swearing, drugs, alcohol, etc.)

Cuts down on time spent doing fun things that don't involve sitting in front of a screen

Cuts down on time spent with parents (talking, reading, Can inspire discussions (about morals, playing board games together)

Encourages parents' lack of involvement with kids

Frightens kids excessively by showing images of real-life violence (terrorist attacks, war, murders, etc.)

Encourages isolation (interacting with a screen rather than interacting with other kids face to face or in the same room)

De-emphasizes reading and creates the need for constant stimulation

Cuts down on time spent playing outside and getting much-needed exercise

Video Games' Positive Influence on Kids

Teaches important problem solving skills

Exposes kids to new images and worlds (Skylanders, Disney Infinity)

sexuality, drugs, etc.) between kids and parents

Gives parents a needed break from kids

Educates kids about the painful realities in the

Creates common ground among kids, basis for conversations about games

Sharpens eye-hand coordination skills and promotes faster reaction times

Keeps kids occupied in the safety of their homes instead of outside in a potentially dangerous environment

As you've just seen, journal writing can stimulate thinking in a loose, unstructured way; it can also prompt the focused thinking required by a specific writing assignment. When you have a specific piece to write, you should approach prewriting in a purposeful, focused manner. You need to:

- Understand the boundaries of the assignment.
- Determine your purpose, audience, tone, and point of view.
- Discover your essay's limited subject.
- Generate raw material about your limited subject.
- Conduct research.
- Organize the raw material into a scratch outline.

Understand the Boundaries of the Assignment

Before you start writing an essay, you need to know what your instructor expects. First, clarify the kind of composition the instructor has in mind. Suppose the instructor asks you to discuss the key ideas in an assigned reading. What does the instructor want you to do? Should you write a brief summary of the selection? Should you compare the author's ideas with your own views of the subject? Should you determine if the author's view is supported by valid evidence? If you're not sure about the details of an assignment, ask your instructor to make the requirements clear.

In particular, clarify whether your instructor expects you to consult outside sources (other pieces of writing) for your essay. If you are required to use sources, then be sure to find out the following:

- The number and kinds of sources you need to include in your essay
- Whether you need to use primary sources (material from interviews, surveys, or studies you conducted), secondary sources (material from research conducted by others), or both
- Whether you need to use books, magazines, journals, and/or other types of sources
- Whether you are expected to use print sources, online sources, or both
- The note-taking procedure your teacher expects you to use (for example, note cards, a research journal, or a research log)
- The required documentation style—for example, the style favored by the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Psychological Association (APA)
- Whether you need to include visuals to clarify or illustrate points you make in your essay and, if so, what kinds of visuals you should use (for example, graphs, charts, or photos)

You also need to find out anything else you need to know to effectively complete the assignment, including how long the paper should be. Many instructors indicate the approximate length of the compositions they assign. If no length requirements are provided, discuss with the instructor what you plan to cover and indicate how long you think your essay will be. The instructor will either give you the go-ahead or help you refine the direction and scope of your work.

Determine Your Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Point of View

Once you understand the requirements for a writing assignment, you're ready to begin thinking about the essay. What is its purpose? For what audience will you write it? What tone will you use? What point of view will be most effective? Later on, you may modify your decisions about these issues. That's fine. But you need to understand the way these considerations influence your work in the early phases of the writing process.

PURPOSE Start by clarifying the essay's broad **purpose**. What do you want the essay to accomplish? The essays you write in college are usually meant to inform or explain, to convince or persuade, to analyze or evaluate, and sometimes to entertain. In practice, writing often combines purposes. You might, for example, write an essay trying to convince people to support a new trash recycling program in your community. But before you win readers over, you most likely would have to explain something about current waste-disposal technology.

When purposes blend in this way, the predominant one influences the essay's content, organization, pattern of development, emphasis, and language. Assume you're writing about a political campaign. If your primary goal is to entertain, to poke gentle fun at two candidates, you might use the comparison-contrast pattern to organize your essay. You might, for example, start with several accounts of one candidate's "foot-in-mouth disease" and then describe the attempts of the other candidate, a multimillionaire, to portray himself as an average Joe. Your language, full of exaggeration, would reflect your objective. But if your primary purpose is to persuade readers that the candidates are incompetent and shouldn't be elected, you might adopt a serious, straightforward style. Selecting the argumentation-persuasion pattern to structure the essay, you might use one candidate's gaffes and the other's posturings to build a case that neither is worthy of public office.

AUDIENCE Writing is a social act and thus implies a reader or an **audience**. To write effectively, you need to identify who your readers are and to take their expectations and needs into account.

If you forget your readers, your essay can run into problems. Consider what happened when one student, an emergency medical technician, submitted a draft of his essay to his instructor for feedback. The assignment was to write about an experience that demonstrated the value of education. Here's the opening paragraph from his first draft:

When I received my first page as an EMT, I realized pretty quickly that all the weeks of KED and CPR training paid off. At first, when the call came in, I was all nerves, I can tell you. When the heat is on, my mind tends to go as blank as an unplugged computer screen. But I beat it to the van right away. After a couple of false turns, my partner and I finally got the right house and found a woman fibrillating and suffering severe myocardial arrhythmia. Despite our anxiety, our heads were on straight; we knew exactly what to do.

The student's instructor found his essay unclear because she knew nothing about being an EMT (emergency medical technician). When writing the essay, he neglected to consider his audience. Specifically, he forgot that college instructors are no more knowledgeable than anyone else about subjects outside their specialty. His instructor also commented that she was put off by the essay's casual, slangy approach ("I was all nerves, I can tell you"; "I beat it to the van right away"). He used a breezy, colloquial style—almost as though he were chatting about the experience with friends—but the instructor had expected a more formal approach.

The more you know about your readers, the more you can adapt your writing to fit their needs and expectations. The following checklist will help you analyze your audience.

V	Analyzing Your Audience: A Checklist
	What are my readers' ages, sex, and educational levels? How do these factors affect what I tell and don't tell them?
	What are my readers' political, religious, and other beliefs? How do these beliefs influence their attitudes and actions?
	What interests and needs motivate my audience?
	How much do my readers already know about my subject? Do they have any misconceptions?
	What biases do they have about me, my subject, and my opinion?
	How do my readers expect me to relate to them?
	What values do I share with my readers that will help me communicate with them?

TONE, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, AND WORD CHOICE Just as your voice may project a range of feelings, your writing can convey one or more tones, or emotional states: enthusiasm, anger, resignation, and so on. Tone is integral to meaning. It permeates writing and reflects your attitude toward yourself, your purpose, your subject, and your readers. In writing, how do you project tone? You pay close attention to sentence structure and word choice. In Chapter 8, we present detailed strategies for finetuning sentences and words during the revision stage. Here we simply want to help you see that determining your tone should come early in the writing process because the tone you select influences the sentences and words you use later.

Sentence structure refers to the way sentences are shaped. Although the following two paragraphs deal with exactly the same subject, note how differences in sentence structure create sharply dissimilar tones:

During the 1960s, many inner-city minorities considered the police an occupying force and an oppressive agent of control. As a result, violence grew against police in poorer neighborhoods, as did the number of residents killed by police.

An occupying force. An agent of control. An oppressor. That's how many inner-city minorities in the '60s viewed the police. Violence against police soared. Police killings of residents mounted.

Informative in its approach, the first paragraph projects a neutral, almost dispassionate tone. The sentences are fairly long, and clear transitions ("During the 1960s"; "As a result") mark the progression of thought. But the second paragraph, with its dramatic, almost alarmist tone, seems intended to elicit a strong emotional response. Its short sentences, fragments, and abrupt transitions reflect the turbulence of the 1960s.

Word choice also plays a role in establishing the tone of an essay. Words have denotations, neutral dictionary meanings, as well as connotations, emotional associations that go beyond the literal meaning. The word beach, for instance, is defined in the dictionary as "a nearly level stretch of pebbles and sand beside a body of water." However, this definition doesn't capture individual responses to the word. For some, beach suggests warmth and relaxation. For others, it calls up images of a once-clean stretch of shoreline ruined by an oil spill.

Because tone and meaning are tightly bound, you must be sensitive to the emotional nuances of words. In a respectful essay about police officers, you wouldn't refer to "cops," "narcs," or "flatfoots" because such terms convey a contempt inconsistent with the intended tone. Now suppose you're writing a satirical piece criticizing a local beauty pageant. Dubbing the participants "livestock on view" leaves no question about your tone and your approach to the topic. But if you simply refer to the participants as "attractive young women," readers might be unsure of your feelings about the pageant. Remember: Readers can't read your mind, only your words.

In most academic writing, the author is expected to use a formal tone. The casual language you use in conversation or text messages with a friend is almost never appropriate for the writing you'll do in your college classes. Your instructor might ask you not to use contractions, abbreviations, or slang. The sentence "You don't eat junk like donuts and puff pastries, just the healthy stuff, if you want a great bod" would not be appropriate in an academic essay. You might revise the sentence as follows: "Avoiding sugary treats and eating healthy foods such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables is an important part of staying in shape." A good rule of thumb is to save informal language for informal situations.

POINT OF VIEW When you write, you speak as a unique individual to your audience. **Point of view** reveals the person you decide to be as you write. Like tone, point of view is closely tied to your purpose, audience, and subject. Imagine you want to convey to students in your composition class the way your grandfather's death—on your eighth birthday—impressed you with life's fragility. To capture that day's impact on you, you might tell what happened from the point of view of a child: "Today is my birthday. I'm eight. Grandpa died an hour before I was supposed to have my party." Or you might choose instead to recount the event speaking as the adult you are today: "My grandfather died an hour before my eighth birthday party." Your point of view will affect the essay's content and organization.

The most strongly individualized point of view is the first person (I, me, mine, we, us, our). The first-person point of view is appropriate in narrative and descriptive essays based on personal experience. It also suits other types of essays (for example, causal analyses and process analyses) when the bulk of evidence presented consists of personal observation. In such essays, avoiding the first person often leads to stilted sentences like "There was strong parental opposition to the decision" or "Although organic chemistry had been dreaded, it became a passion." In contrast, the sentences sound much more natural when the first person is used: "Our parents strongly opposed the decision" and "Although I had dreaded organic chemistry, it became my passion."

In essays voicing an opinion, most first-person expressions ("I believe that..." and "In my opinion...") are unnecessary and distracting. The point of view is assumed to be the writer's unless another source is indicated.

In some situations, writers use the **second person** (you, your, yours), alone or in combination with the first person. For instance, "If you're the kind of person who doodles while thinking, you may want to try mapping..." rather than "If a writer is the kind of person who doodles while thinking, he or she may want to try mapping..." The second person simplifies style and involves the reader in a more personal way. You'll also find that the imperative form of the verb ("Send letters of protest to the television networks") engages readers in much the same way. The implied you speaks to the audience directly and lends immediacy to the directions. Despite these advantages, the second-person point of view isn't appropriate in many college courses, where more formal, less conversational writing is usually called for.

The **third-person** point of view is by far the most common in academic writing. The third person gets its name from the stance it conveys—that of an outsider or "third person" observing and reporting on matters of primarily public rather than private importance. In discussions of historical events, scientific phenomena, works of art, and the like, the third-person point of view conveys a feeling of distance and objectivity. Be careful not to adopt such a detached stance that you end up using a stiff, artificial style: "On this campus, approximately two-thirds of the student body is dependent on bicycles as the primary mode of transportation to class." Aim instead for a more natural and personable quality: "Two-thirds of the students on campus ride their bikes to class."

Discover Your Essay's Limited Subject

Once you have a firm grasp of the assignment's boundaries and have determined your purpose, audience, tone, and point of view, you're ready to focus on a limited subject of the general assignment. Too broad a subject can result in a rambling essay, so be sure to restrict your general subject before starting to write.

The following examples show the difference between general subjects that are too broad for an essay and limited subjects that are appropriate and workable.

General Subject	Less General	Limited Subject
Education	Computers in education	Computers in elementary school arithmetic classes
Transportation	Low-cost travel	Hitchhiking
Work	Planning for a career	College internships

How do you move from a general subject to a narrow subject? Imagine that you're asked to prepare a straightforward, informative essay for your writing class. The assignment is prompted by Larry Rosen's essay "Our Obsessive Relationship with Technology":

Using first-person point of view and numerous personal examples, Rosen crafts an essay in which he shares his concerns about our obsessive relationship with technology. Write an essay in which you share similar or related concerns of your own. For example, you might write about possible negative effects of social networking sites, video games, or texting. Instead of writing in first person as Rosen does, use the third-person point of view. Consider including several outside sources to strengthen the effectiveness of your essay, and be sure to correctly document your sources.

Keeping your purpose, audience, tone, and point of view in mind, your next step may be to question or brainstorm the general subject. Although the two techniques encourage you to roam freely over a subject, they also help restrict the discussion by revealing which aspects of the subject interest you most.



QUESTION THE GENERAL SUBJECT One way to narrow a subject is to ask a series of who, how, why, where, when, and what questions. The following example shows how Caylah Francis, an eighteen-year-old college student, used this technique to limit the Rosen assignment.

You may recall that, before reading Rosen's essay, Caylah used her journal to explore the topic by listing video games' effects on children. After reading "Our Obsessive Relationship with Technology," Caylah concluded that she agreed with much of what Rosen had to say: She felt that various forms of technology have become an obsession for many people and have brought about many negative effects. Caylah soon realized that she had to narrow the Rosen assignment. She started by asking a number of pointed questions about the general topic. She used the table feature on her computer to create boxes that she filled in. As she proceeded, she was aware that the same questions could have led to different limited subjects—just as other questions would have.

General Assignment: Write about the negative effects of technology.

Question	Limited Subject
Who is to blame for the negative effects of various technologies?	Parents give kids too much freedom to play violent video games.
<u>How</u> have schools contributed to the negative effects of technology?	Schools today rely too much on technology.
Why do kids get so wrapped up in things like social networking sites, video games, and texting?	Parents don't give kids enough time and attention.
Where can kids get the kind of guidance and advice they need about possible negative effects of technology?	Parents need to give kids more guidance and enforce limits.
When are children most vulnerable to the negative effects of technology?	Adolescents are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of technology.
What dangers related to technology should parents discuss with their children?	Dangers of texting and driving, sharing too much information on Facebook, becoming addicted to playing violent video games

BRAINSTORM THE GENERAL SUBJECT Another way to focus on a limited subject is to list quickly everything about the general topic that pops into your mind. Write down brief words, phrases, and abbreviations that capture your free-floating thoughts. Writing in complete sentences will slow you down. Don't try to organize or censor your ideas. Even the most fleeting, random, or seemingly outrageous thoughts can be productive.

Here's an example of the brainstorming that Caylah Francis did in an effort to gather more material for the Rosen assignment.



General Subject: Technology has many negative effects.

People don't talk to each other

Spend too much time texting

Can't stand being away from their phones

Spend hours updating Facebook instead of going out with friends or exercising

Never take time to read books for fun

People think they can text while driving

Even kids obsessed with technology

Not enough guidance from parents

All Brandon and Josh want to do is play their violent video games

Dangers of playing violent video games

Are they obsessed or addicted to playing them

As you can see, questioning and brainstorming suggest many possible limited subjects. To identify especially promising ones, reread your material. What arouses your interest, anger, or curiosity? What themes seem to dominate and cut to the heart of the matter? Star or highlight ideas with potential. Pay close attention to material generated at the end of your questioning and brainstorming. Often your mind takes a few minutes to warm up, with the best ideas popping out last.

After marking the material, come up with several phrases or sentences that summarize the most promising limited subjects. Here are just a few that emerged from Caylah's questioning and brainstorming the Rosen assignment:



Danger of putting too much personal information on Facebook

Parents need to give their kids guidance and set limits to help them avoid negative effects of technology

Adults need to realize dangers of technology and set limits for themselves and their children

Violent video games especially harmful to kids today

Looking back at the work she did for her pre-reading journal assignment, Caylah decided to write on the last of these limited subjects. This topic, in turn, is the focus of our discussion in the rest of this chapter.

Generate Raw Material About Your Limited Subject

When a limited subject strikes you as having possibilities, your next step is to begin generating material about that topic. If you generate raw material now, during the prewriting stage, you'll find it easier to write the essay later on. Because you'll already have amassed much of the material for your composition, you'll be able to concentrate on other matters—for example, finding the right words to convey your ideas. Taking the time to explore your limited subject during the prewriting stage also means you won't find yourself halfway through the first draft without much to say.

To generate raw material, you may use freewriting, brainstorming, mapping, and other techniques.

FREEWRITE ON YOUR LIMITED SUBJECT Although freewriting can help you narrow a general subject, it's more valuable once you have limited your topic. Freewriting means jotting down in rough sentences or phrases everything that comes to mind.

To capture this continuous stream of thought, write or type nonstop for ten minutes or more. Don't reread, edit, or pay attention to organization, spelling, or grammar. If your mind goes blank, repeat words until another thought emerges.

Here is part of the freewriting that Caylah generated about her limited subject, "The harmful effects of playing violent video games":

Kids today have tough problems to face. Lots of dangers. Lots of temptations. They see violence everywhere. The Internet first and foremost. Also crimes of violence against kids. Parents have to keep up with cost of living, everything costs more, kids want and expect more. My brothers sure expect and get more than I did when I was their age. Today, both parents almost always have full-time jobs. Parents have to work more hours than ever before to give their kids everything they need and want. Sometimes parents give in and buy them things that are not good for them. Like some of the games my brothers play. What were my parents thinking? Why would they buy those games for Brandon and Josh? Kids are left alone at home more than they ever were before. Kids grow up too fast, too fast. Kids grow up too fast, too fast. Drugs and alcohol. Witness real-life violence everywhere, like terrorist attacks and school shootings. Kids can't handle knowing too much at an early age. Both parents at work much of the day. Kids spend too much time at home alone. Can do pretty much anything they want when parents aren't around. Another problem is getting kids to do homework, lots of other things to do. Especially like texting friends or checking out the latest Facebook posts. When I was young, we did homework after dinner, no excuses accepted by my parents. My parents are sure a lot easier on my brothers than they were on me. That's not a good thing.

BRAINSTORM YOUR LIMITED SUBJECT Let your mind wander freely, as you did when narrowing your general subject. This time, though, list every idea, fact, and example that occurs to you about your limited subject. Use brief words and phrases, so you don't get bogged down writing full sentences. For now, don't worry whether ideas fit together or whether the points listed make sense.

To gather additional material on her limited subject for the Rosen assignment ("The harmful effects of playing violent video games"), Caylah brainstormed the following list:



Parents at work long hours

Kids left alone

Kids expect more and more things

Prices of things outrageous, even with both parents working

Ads make kids want more of everything

Clothes so important to kids today

Kids have too much freedom

Parents too permissive

Kids become addicted

Start acting like the characters in the games they play

Get in trouble for being aggressive at school and at home

Some kids become addicted to playing violent video games

Can't stop playing even when parents tell them to stop

Lie about playing

Health issues

Sit too much

Many become obese

Not enough fresh air and sunshine

Kids exposed to negative influences

Exposed to drugs

Exposed to profanity

Exposed to sex

USE GROUP BRAINSTORMING Brainstorming with other people stretches the imagination, revealing possibilities you may not have considered on your own. Group brainstorming doesn't have to be conducted in a formal classroom. You can bounce ideas around with friends and family anywhere.

MAP THE LIMITED SUBJECT If you're the kind of person who doodles while thinking, you may want to try mapping, sometimes called diagramming or clustering.

Begin by expressing your limited subject in a crisp phrase and placing it in the center of a blank sheet of paper. As ideas come to you, put them along lines or in boxes or circles around the limited subject. Draw arrows and lines to show the relationships among ideas. Don't stop there, however. Focus on each idea; as subpoints and details come to you, connect them to their source idea, again using boxes, lines, circles, or arrows to clarify how everything relates.

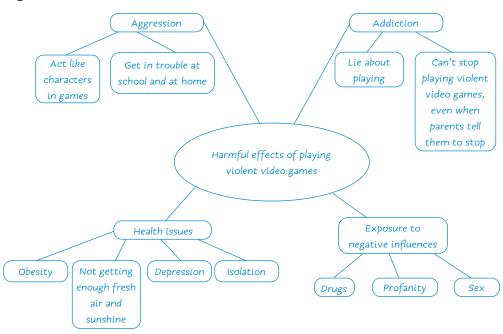


Figure 2.2 Mapping the Limited Subject

Figure 2.2 is an example of the kind of map that Caylah Francis could have drawn to generate material for her limited subject based on the Rosen assignment.

USE THE PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT Throughout this book, we show how writers use various patterns of development (narration, process analysis, definition, and so on), singly or in combination, to develop and organize their ideas. Because each pattern has its own distinctive logic, the patterns encourage you to think about a limited subject in surprising new ways.



The various patterns of development are discussed in detail in later chapters. At this point, though, you will find the following chart helpful. It not only summarizes the broad purpose of each pattern but also shows the way each pattern could generate different raw material for the limited subject of Caylah's essay.

Limited Subject: The harmful effects of playing violent video games.

Pattern of Development	Purpose	Raw Material
Description	To detail what a person, place, or object is like	Detail what the games are like—the sexy images, the language used, the thrill of the chase, the danger and excitement of battle
Narration	To relate an event	Recount what happened when neighbors tried to forbid their kids from playing the same violent games their friends were playing
Illustration	To provide specific instances or examples	Offer examples of particular games and the violence in them

Pattern of Development	Purpose	Raw Material
Division- classification	To divide something into parts or to group related things into categories	Identify different kinds of violent games—those about war, those about high-speed chases from law enforcement, those about abduction, etc.
Process analysis	To explain how something happens or how something is done	Explain step by step how adolescents can go from playing their first violent video game to becoming addicted to them
Comparison- contrast	To point out similarities and/or dissimilarities	Contrast popular video games today with the kinds of indoor games kids played 50 years ago—Monopoly, checkers, dominoes, etc.
Cause-effect	To analyze reasons and consequences	Explain why parents are not around to supervise their kids: Everything costs so much and we expect more luxuries today than our parents and grandparents expected—such as large houses and cars for everyone in the family who is old enough to drive
		Explain the consequences of absentee parents: Kids left alone too much with time to do whatever they want; they spend hours on the Internet; they spend far too many hours each week playing violent video games
Definition	To explain the meaning of a term or concept	What is meant by the "tough love" parents must show their kids by setting limits and enforcing them?
Argumentation- persuasion	To win people over to a point of view	Convince parents that they must learn how to say "no" to their kids and not let them do something just because their friends are doing it

Conduct Research

Depending on your topic, you may find it helpful to visit the library or go online to identify books and articles about your limited subject. At this point, you don't need to read closely the material you find. Just skim and perhaps take a few brief notes on ideas and points that could be useful.

Early in the drafting process, Caylah realized that she needed to conduct research to find out more about her subject: the harmful effects of playing violent video games. She had many ideas about possible harmful effects, but she needed to find out what reputable sources say about her subject. She knew her essay would not be effective unless she included documented sources to support her claims.

In researching for her assignment, Caylah looked under the following headings and subheadings:



The most popular violent video games on the market today

Effects of playing violent video games

Isolation and video game play

Obesity and video game play

Addiction and video game play

Aggression and video game play

Family

Parent-child relationships Children of working parents School and home

Caylah eventually identified several sources that offered important material on her subject. She read these sources critically and made sure they were reputable. She also made sure the sources were relevant to her topic and provided trustworthy information. Many of the sources she found came from Internet sites, and Caylah looked closely at who hosted the sites, who wrote the articles, the links provided by the sites, and whether the information on the sites was supported with reliable, credible documentation. As she took notes, she was careful to place quotation marks around words and phrases she copied directly from the sources and to record all of the information she would need when compiling a list of the works she consulted and quoted from when researching and writing her essay. In addition, she made copies of her source materials so that she could easily access them if needed.

Organize the Raw Material into a Scratch Outline

2.2 Organize your ideas into a scratch outline that will make the writing process more manageable.

Some students prefer to wait until after they have formulated a thesis to shape their prewriting material. But if you find that imposing a preliminary order on your prewriting provides the focus needed to devise an effective thesis, you'll probably want to prepare a scratch list or outline that can help you shape the tentative ideas generated during prewriting.

As you reread your exploratory thoughts about the limited subject, keep the following questions in mind: What purpose have you decided on? What are the characteristics of your audience? What tone will be effective in achieving your purpose with your audience? What point of view will you adopt? Record your responses to these questions at the top of your prewriting material.

Now go to work on the raw material itself. Cross out anything not appropriate for your purpose, audience, tone, and point of view; add points that didn't originally occur to you. Star or circle compelling items that warrant further development. Then draw arrows between related items, your goal being to group such material under a common heading. Finally, determine what seems to be the best order for the headings. If you are creating your scratch outline on a computer, cut and paste; move items around as you try to figure out the order that might work best for presenting your ideas.

By giving you a sense of the way your free-form material might fit together, a scratch outline makes the writing process more manageable. You're less likely to feel overwhelmed once you start writing because you'll already have some idea about how to shape your material into a meaningful statement. Remember, though, the outline can, and most likely will, be modified along the way.

Below are Caylah Francis's handwritten annotations on her brainstormed list, sometimes called a scratch list. Note that Caylah's annotations illustrate the way she began shaping her raw prewriting material. She started at the top by recording her limited subject as well as her decisions about purpose, audience, tone, and point of view. Next, she crossed out the material she didn't want to use in her supporting paragraphs and jotted down new ideas that came to her. For instance, Caylah realized that the first eight items on her list were related to her topic in that they offered reasons why kids play violent video games, but they were not directly related to the harmful effects of playing the games. So she crossed them off but wondered if she might be able to use some of those ideas later in the drafting process when she started writing her introduction. Caylah also decided that the harmful effects of too much exposure to inappropriate elements such as drugs, sex, and profanity were too complex to include in her essay, so she crossed those out. She also added new ideas: "some might also become depressed" and "too much isolation." Note how clear supporting points emerged after she grouped together similar ideas.

Purpose: To inform

Audience: Instructor as well as class members, most of whom are 18-20 years old

Tone: Serious and straightforward

Point of view: Third person (sister of two adolescent boys)

Limited subject: The harmful effects of playing violent video games

Parents at work long hours

Kids left alone

Kids expect more and more things

Prices of things outrageous, even with both parents working

Ads make kids want more of everything

Clothes so important to kids today

Kids have too much freedom

Parents too permissive

Start acting like the characters in the games they play Get in trouble for being aggressive at school and at home Some kids become addicted to playing violent video games Can't stop playing even when parents tell them to stop Lie about playing

(1) Kids more aggressive

(2) Kids become addicted



Sit too much

Many become obese —some might also become depressed

Not enough fresh air and sunshine —too much isolation

Kids exposed to negative influences

Exposed to drugs

Exposed to profanity

Exposed to sex

The following scratch outline shows how Caylah began to shape her prewriting into a more organized format.

Purpose: To inform

Audience: Instructor as well as class members, most of whom are 18-20 years old

Tone: Serious and straightforward

Point of view: Third person (sister of two adolescent boys)

Limited subject: The harmful effects of playing violent video games

- Kids more aggressive
 - —They start acting like the characters in the games they play
 - —They get in trouble for being aggressive at school and at home
- **2.** Kids become addicted to games
 - —They can't stop playing, even when parents tell them to stop
 - —They lie about playing
- 3. Their health is damaged
 - —Many become obese
 - —Some kids become depressed
 - —Not enough time outside in fresh air and sunshine
 - —Too much isolation

Set A

Activities: Getting Started Through Prewriting

1. Number the items in each set from 1 (*broadest subject*) to 5 (*most limited subject*):

Set B

Abortion	Business majors
Controversial social issue	Students' majors
Cutting state abortion funds	College students
Federal funding of abortions	Kinds of students on campus
Social issues	Why students major in business

- 2. Which of the following topics are too broad for an essay of three to five typewritten pages: reality TV's appeal to college students; day care; trying to "kick" the junk food habit; romantic relationships; international terrorism?
- 3. Assume you're writing essays on two of the topics given here. For each one, explain how you might adapt your purpose, tone, and point of view to the audiences indicated in parentheses. (You may find it helpful to work with others on this activity.)
 - a. Overcoming shyness (ten-year-olds; teachers of ten-year-olds; young singles living in large apartment buildings)
 - b. Telephone solicitations (people training for a job in this field; homeowners; readers of a humorous magazine)
 - c. Smoking (people who have quit; smokers; elementary school children)
- **4.** Choose one of the following general topics for an essay. Then use the prewriting technique indicated in parentheses to identify several limited topics. Next, with the help of one or more patterns of development, generate raw material on the limited subject you consider most interesting.
 - a. Friendship (journal writing)
 - b. Amusement parks (*mapping*)
 - c. Leisure (freewriting)
 - d. Action movies (brainstorming)
 - e. Required courses (group brainstorming)
 - f. Manners (questioning)
- **5.** For each set of limited subjects and purposes that follows, determine which pattern(s) of development would be most useful. (Save this material so you can work with it further.)
 - a. The failure of recycling efforts on campus
 Purpose: to explain why students and faculty tend to disregard recycling guidelines
 - b. The worst personality trait that a teacher, parent, boss, or friend can have *Purpose*: to poke fun at this personality trait
 - c. The importance of being knowledgeable about national affairs *Purpose*: to convince students to stay informed about current events
- 6. Select one of the following limited subjects. Then, given the purpose and audience indicated, draft a paragraph using the first-, second-, or third-person point of view. Next, rewrite the paragraph two more times, each time using a different point of view. What differences do you see in the three versions? Which version do you prefer? Why?

a. Fantasy movies like Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings series

Purpose: to defend the enjoyment of such films

Audience: those who like "art" films

b. Senioritis

Purpose: to explain why high school seniors lose interest in school

Audience: parents and teachers

c. Television commercials aimed at teens and young adults

Purpose: to make fun of the commercials' persuasive appeals

Audience: advertising executives

- 7. Select one of the following general subjects. Keeping in mind the indicated purpose, audience, tone, and point of view, use a prewriting technique to limit the subject. Next, by means of another prewriting strategy, generate relevant information about the restricted topic. Finally, shape your raw material into a scratch outline—crossing out, combining, and adding ideas as needed. (Save your scratch outline so you can work with it further after reading the chapter on identifying a thesis.)
 - a. Hip-hop music

Purpose: to explain its attraction

Audience: classical music fans

Tone: playful

Writer's point of view: a hip-hop fan

b. Becoming a volunteer

Purpose: to recruit

Audience: ambitious young professionals

Tone: straightforward

Writer's point of view: head of a volunteer organization

c. Sexist attitudes in music videos

Purpose: to inform

Audience: teenagers of both sexes

Tone: objective but with some emotion Writer's point of view: a teenage male

Chapter 3

Identifying a Thesis



Learning Objectives

- **3.1** Identify the purpose of a thesis.
- **3.2** Craft an effective thesis, avoiding thesis pitfalls.
- **3.3** Place your thesis in an essay.



The process of prewriting—discovering a limited subject and generating ideas about it—prepares you for the next stage in writing an essay: identifying the composition's thesis, or controlling idea.

What Is a Thesis?

3.1 Identify the purpose of a thesis.

The **thesis**, which presents your position on a subject, should focus on an interesting and significant issue, one that engages your energies and merits your consideration. Your thesis determines what does and does not belong in the essay. The thesis, especially when it occurs early in an essay, also helps focus the reader on the piece's central point and thus helps you achieve your writing purpose.

Crafting a Thesis

3.2 Craft an effective thesis, avoiding thesis pitfalls.

Sometimes the thesis emerges early in the prewriting stage, particularly if a special angle on your limited topic sparks your interest or becomes readily apparent. Often, though, you'll need to do some work to determine your thesis. For some topics, you may need to do some research. For others, the best way to identify a promising thesis is to look through your prewriting and ask yourself these questions:

- What statement does all this prewriting support?
- What aspect of the limited subject is covered in most detail?
- What is the focus of the most provocative material?

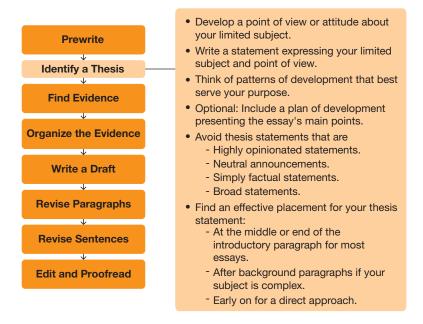
For more details, see Figure 3.1.

Creating an Effective Thesis

What makes a thesis effective? The thesis statement, generally expressed in one or two sentences, has two parts. One part presents your essay's limited subject; the other presents your point of view, or attitude, about that subject. In each of the following thesis statements, the limited subject is underlined once and the attitude twice.

General Subject	Limited Subject	Thesis Statement
Education	Computers in elementary school mathematics classes	Computer programs in mathematics <u>can individualize instruction more</u> <u>effectively than the average elementary school</u> <u>teacher can.</u>
Work	College internships	The college internship program has had positive consequences for students.
Our anti-child world	Special problems that parents face raising children today	Being a parent today is much more difficult than it was a generation ago.

Figure 3.1 Process Diagram: Identifying a Thesis



TONE AND POINT OF VIEW An effective thesis establishes a tone and point of view suitable for a given purpose and audience. If you're writing an essay arguing that multimedia equipment can never replace a live teacher in the classroom, you need to frame a thesis that matches your and your readers' concerns about the subject: "Education won't be improved by purchasing more electronic teaching tools but rather by allocating more money to hire and develop good teachers."

IMPLIED PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT An essay's purpose may suggest a pattern of development. In the same way, an effective thesis may point the way to a pattern of development that would be appropriate for developing the essay. Consider the thesis statements in the preceding list. The first thesis might use comparison-contrast; the second cause-effect; and the third argumentation-persuasion.

INCLUDING A PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT Sometimes a thesis will include a **plan of development**: a concise *overview of the essay's main points in the exact order* in which those points will be discussed. To incorporate a plan of development into your thesis, use single words or brief phrases that convey—in a nutshell—your essay's key points; then add those summarized points to the end of the thesis, being sure to present them in the order in which they will appear in the essay. Note, for example, the way a plan of development (in italics) is included in the following thesis: "An after-school job develops responsibility, human-relations skills, and an awareness of career options."

A thesis with a plan of development is effective in keeping readers focused on an essay's main points. Be careful, though, not to overload it with too much information.

If the essay's key points resist your efforts to reduce them to crisp phrases, you can place the plan of development in a separate sentence, directly after the thesis. Consider the plan of development (in italics) that comes after the following thesis: "Many parents have unrealistic expectations for their children. These parents want their children to accept their values, follow their paths, and succeed where they have failed." Note that the points in a plan of development are expressed in grammatically parallel terms, in this case as verb phrases ("accept their values," "follow their paths," "succeed where they have failed").

Avoiding Thesis Pitfalls

Because preparing an effective thesis is such a critical step in writing a sharply focused essay, you need to avoid the following four common problems.

- 1. DON'T WRITE A HIGHLY OPINIONATED STATEMENT Although your thesis should express your attitude toward your subject, don't go overboard and write a dogmatic, overstated thesis: "With characteristic clumsiness, campus officials bumbled their way through the recent budget crisis." A more moderate thesis can make the same point, without alienating readers: "Campus officials had trouble managing the recent budget crisis effectively."
- 2. DON'T MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT Some writers use the thesis statement merely to announce the limited subject of their essay and forget to indicate their attitude toward the subject. Such statements are announcements of intent, not thesis statements. Compare the following:

Announcement

My essay will discuss whether a student pub should exist on campus.

The legislating of assault weapons will be the subject of my essay.

Thesis Statement

This college should not allow a student pub on campus.

Banning assault weapons is the first step toward controlling crime in America.

3. DON'T MAKE A FACTUAL STATEMENT Your thesis, and thus your essay, should focus on an issue capable of being developed. If a fact is used as a thesis, you have no place to go; a fact generally doesn't invite much discussion. Notice the difference between the factual statements and thesis statements in the following table:

Factual Statement

Many businesses pollute the environment.

Movies nowadays are often violent.

Thesis Statement

Tax penalties should be levied against businesses that pollute the environment.

Movie violence provides a healthy outlet for aggression.

4. DON'T MAKE A BROAD STATEMENT Broad statements make it difficult for readers to grasp your essay's point. If you start with a broad thesis, you're saddled with the impossible task of trying to develop a book-length idea in an essay that runs only several pages.

Broad Statement

Nowadays, high school education is often meaningless.

Nobody reads newspapers anymore.

Thesis Statement

High school diplomas have been devalued by grade inflation.

With the growth of online sources, fewer and fewer people depend on print newspapers for news.

Arriving at an Effective Thesis

Previously, we pointed out how Caylah Francis identified her essay's thesis: "Playing violent video games can have many negative effects on kids. It can lead to increased levels of aggression, video game addiction, and serious health issues." But Caylah went through several stages before she came up with the final wording.

- Caylah started with her limited subject ("Violent video games especially harmful to kids today"). She tentatively worded her thesis to read "My essay will show the harmful effects of kids playing violent video games."
- Next, she asked herself, "Is my thesis highly opinionated? an announcement? a factual statement? a broad statement?" She realized that she had prepared an announce*ment* rather than a thesis.
- Caylah rewrote her statement so that she would not be making an announcement. She came up with the following: "Playing violent video games can have many negative effects on kids."
- As she read over her revised statement, Caylah realized that although she had eliminated the announcement, the rephrasing highlighted a problem she hadn't thought about previously: her statement was too broad and needed to be more specific. She realized that she needed to let her readers know the specific negative effects of playing violent video games that she would be discussing in her essay: (1) increased levels of aggression, (2) video game addiction, and (3) serious health issues.
- Caylah revised her statement one more time to eliminate these problems and arrived at the final wording of her thesis: "Playing violent video games can have many negative effects on kids. It can lead to increased levels of aggression, video game addiction, and serious health issues."

Placing the Thesis in an Essay

3.3 Place your thesis in an essay.

The thesis is often at the middle or end of the introduction, but audience, purpose, and tone should always guide your decision about its placement. For example, if you feel readers would appreciate a direct, forthright approach, you might place the thesis early, even at the very beginning of the introduction.

Sometimes the thesis is reiterated—using fresh words—in the essay's conclusion or elsewhere. If done well, this repetition keeps readers focused on the essay's key