THE LITTLE, BROWN COMPACT HANDBOOK

TENTH EDITION

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The Little, Brown Compact Handbook

Tenth Edition

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Preface

The Little, Brown Compact Handbook provides writers with an accessible reference, one that helps them find what they need and then use what they find. Combining the authority of its parent, *The Little, Brown Handbook,* with a brief and more convenient format, the *Compact Handbook* addresses writers of varying experience, in varying fields, answering common questions about the writing process, grammar and style, research writing, and more.

What's new in the 10th edition

As a new author on this edition, I have made revisions guided by reviewer feedback and by my own experience teaching college writing in online and face-to-face classrooms. Students today read and write using their medium of choice: the mobile phone. I have made revisions throughout the book to speak to student experience and needs, while respecting the longstanding effectiveness of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. The most notable new feature of the 10th edition is its availability in the digital Revel platform, as detailed below.

New sample student papers: All of the student samples in the book, from short works in progress to complete papers, are new to this edition. The topics and sources used in these new sample papers are timely and attuned to student interests.

- Sample informative essay on funding for college athletics (Chapter 3)
- Sample essay responding to a reading, "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" by Nicholas Carr (Chapter 6)
- Sample critical analysis of a text, analyzing an essay on selfies from *Psychology Today* (Chapter 10)
- Sample proposal argument on online courses (Chapter 11)
- Sample research paper in MLA style, on sustainable agriculture (Chapter 57)
- Sample literary analysis paper in MLA style, on *The Country of the Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett (Chapter 55)
- Sample research paper in APA style, on perceptions of mental illness on college campuses (Chapter 58)

New learning objectives and chapter architecture: Every chapter now begins with a list of learning objectives that help students understand what they are expected to learn and do in each chapter. These objectives are written using language that reflects Bloom's taxonomy of learning, and the objectives also align in many cases with the *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition*. These learning objectives not only guide students but also help instructors tasked

with aligning course content with departmental or institutional outcomes statements for their courses.

Main sections of each chapter are aligned with the chapter learning objectives, reinforcing the active learning model built into the language of the objectives.

Updated documentation coverage: MLA published the 8th edition of its *Handbook* in 2016, and the *Chicago Manual of Style* was published in a new 17th edition late in 2017. All model papers and sample citations in the book have been updated to align with the new documentation styles.

New chapter on writing about literature. Chapter 55 is entirely new to this edition, and it follows a student as she reads, responds to, and writes about a novel, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, by Sarah Orne Jewett.

New coverage of composing for social media in workplace and public situations (Chapter 14).

New coverage and visual examples of database searches (Chapter 51).

A handbook for many purposes

The handbook gives students a solid foundation in the goals and requirements of college writing.

- The chapter on academic writing includes a greatly expanded overview of common academic genres, such as responses, critical analyses, arguments, informative and personal writing, and research papers and reports. The discussion highlights key features of each genre and points students to examples in the handbook.
- Eleven examples of academic writing in varied genres appear throughout the handbook, among them a new informative essay and a new social-science research report documented in APA style.
- Emphasizing critical analysis and writing, the expanded chapter on critical reading and writing includes a student's analysis of a Web advertisement and a revised discussion of writing critically about texts and visuals.
- Pulling together key material on academic integrity, Chapter 9 on academic writing and Chapter 53 on plagiarism discuss developing one's own perspective on a topic, using and managing sources, and avoiding plagiarism. Other chapters throughout the handbook reinforce these important topics.
- Synthesis receives special emphasis wherever students might need help balancing their own and others' views, such as in responding to texts.
- Parts 7 and 8 give students a solid foundation in research writing and writing in the disciplines (literature, other humanities, social

sciences, natural and applied sciences), along with extensive coverage of documentation in MLA, Chicago, APA, and CSE styles.

A reference for research writing and documentation

With detailed advice, the handbook always attends closely to research writing and source citation. The discussion stresses using the library Web site as the gateway to finding sources, managing information, evaluating and synthesizing sources, integrating source material, and avoiding plagiarism.

- Coverage of developing a working bibliography groups sources by type, reflecting a streamlined approach to source material throughout the handbook.
- The discussion of libraries' Web sites covers various ways that students may search for sources—catalog, databases, and research guides.
- A discussion of keywords and subject headings helps students develop and refine their search terms.
- A discussion of gathering information from sources stresses keeping accurate records of source material, marking borrowed words and ideas clearly, and using synthesis.
- A chapter on documenting sources explains key features of source documentation, defines the relationship between in-text citations and a bibliography, and presents the pros and cons of bibliography software.
- The discussion of evaluating sources—library, Web, and social media—helps students discern purposes and distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. Case studies show the application of critical criteria to sample articles and Web documents.
- The extensive chapter on avoiding plagiarism discusses deliberate and careless plagiarism, shows examples of plagiarized and revised sentences, and gives updated advice about avoiding plagiarism with online sources.
- A research paper-in-progress on sustainable agriculture follows a student through the research process and culminates in an annotated paper documented in MLA style.

An updated guide to documentation

The extensive coverage of four common documentation styles—MLA, Chicago, APA, and CSE—reflects each style's most recent version.

- Updated, annotated samples of key source types illustrate MLA and APA documentation, showing students how to find the bibliographical information needed to cite each type and highlighting the similarities and differences between print and database sources.

- The chapter on MLA documentation reflects the new 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*. In addition, the sample papers and other examples that show MLA style have been updated to reflect the latest MLA guidelines.
- A complete social-science research report shows APA style in the context of student writing.
- The discussion of CSE documentation reflects the new 8th edition of *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*.
- For all styles, color highlighting makes authors, titles, dates, and other citation elements easy to grasp.

A reference for writing as a process

The handbook takes a practical approach to assessing the writing situation, generating ideas, developing the thesis statement, revising, and other elements of the writing process.

- An expanded discussion of thesis covers using the thesis statement to preview organization.
- A reorganized presentation of revising and editing distinguishes revising clearly as a step separate from editing.
- A revised discussion of preparing a writing portfolio gives an overview of common formats and requirements.
- Chapter 7 on paragraphs offers new, relevant examples illustrating paragraph development.
- A revised and streamlined chapter on presenting writing focuses on essential information related to document design, visuals and other media, and writing for online environments.

A reference on usage, grammar, and punctuation

The handbook's core reference material reliably and concisely explains basic concepts and common errors, provides hundreds of annotated examples from across the curriculum, and offers frequent exercises in connected discourse.

- Dozens of new and revised examples and exercises clarify and test important concepts.
- Two common trouble spots—sentence fragments and passive voice—are discussed in great detail and illustrated with examples.
- Examples in Chapter 18 on appropriate language show common shortcuts of texting and other electronic communication and how to revise them for academic writing.
- Summary and checklist boxes provide quick-reference help with color highlighting to distinguish sentence elements.

A guide to visual and media literacy

The handbook helps students process nonverbal information and use it effectively in their writing.

- A student's analysis of a Web advertisement illustrates critical thinking about a visual.
- Updated and detailed help with preparing or finding illustrations appears in Chapter 8 on presenting writing and Chapter 51 on finding sources.
- Thorough discussions of critically reading advertisements, graphs, and other visuals appear in Chapter 10 on critical reading, Chapter 11 on argument, and Chapter 52 on working with sources.

A guide for culturally and linguistically diverse writers

At sections labeled Culture and Language, the handbook provides extensive rhetorical and grammatical help, illustrated with examples, for writers whose first language or dialect is not standard American English.

- Fully integrated coverage, instead of a separate section, means that students can find what they need without having to know which problems they do and don't share with native SAE speakers.

A guide for writing beyond the classroom

A chapter on public writing extends the handbook's usefulness beyond academic writing.

- Discussions of writing for social media encourage students to consider their potential audience now and in the future, whether they are writing to express themselves or to represent an organization.
- Updated coverage of writing a job application discusses cover letters, résumés, and professional online profiles.

An accessible reference guide

The handbook is an open book for students, with a convenient lay-flat binding, tabbed dividers, and many internal features that help students navigate and use the content.

- A clean, uncluttered page design uses color and type clearly to distinguish parts of the book and elements of the pages.
- A brief table of contents on the first page of the book provides an at-a-glance overview of the book, while a detailed table of contents appears inside the back cover.
- Color highlighting in boxes and on documentation models distinguishes important elements.

- An unusually accessible organization groups related problems so that students can easily find what they need.
- Annotations on both visual and verbal examples connect principles and illustrations.
- Dictionary-style headers in the index make it easy to find entries.

Revel

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors' narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

Learn more about Revel

www.pearson.com/revel

Supplements

Make more time for your students with instructor resources that offer effective learning assessments and classroom engagement. Pearson's partnership with educators does not end with the delivery of course materials; Pearson is there with you on the first day of class and beyond. A dedicated team of local Pearson representatives will work with you to not only choose course materials but also integrate them into your class and assess their effectiveness. Our goal is your goal—to improve instruction with each semester.

Pearson is pleased to offer the following resources to qualified adopters of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. Several of these supplements are available to instantly download from Revel or on the Instructor Resource Center (IRC); please visit the IRC at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc to register for access.

- *PowerPoint Presentation* Make lectures more enriching for students. The PowerPoint Presentation includes a full lecture outline and photos and figures from the textbook and Revel edition. Available on the IRC.
- *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook Answer Key* provides answers to the handbook's exercises.
- *Diagnostic and Editing Tests and Exercises* are cross-referenced to *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* and are available online.

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My first and most important debt of gratitude is to Jane E. Aaron, whose work through many editions of this handbook leaves me with some very large shoes to fill. I can only hope to carry on her legacy of quality, accuracy, and usefulness. Having pored over every page of this handbook many times now, I continue to be awed by its gentle, guiding awareness of the needs of student writers.

Karon Bowers at Pearson and Carolyn Merrill and Aron Keesbury at Ohlinger Publishing Services have guided the project throughout this revision cycle. Cynthia Cox, Rachel Harbour, and Stephanie Laird at Ohlinger have been there every step and every page of the way through the editorial and production processes, working on four books (two print, two digital) at the same time. Susan McIntyre has been an incredible copy editor, helping to make sure that the new material is seamlessly woven into the text and smoothing out many awkward sentences. Heather Tolliver at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock contributed a number of examples and sources as an adept research assistant. David Kear has been a wonderful contributor of ideas, energy, clarity, and creativity as development editor, keeping both sanity and humor intact through a long and challenging publishing journey.

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Part 1

The Writing Process

Part 1
The Writing Process

Chapter 1
The Writing Situation

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1.1

Learning Objectives

1.1 Analyze the writing situation.
1.2 Define and analyze your audience.
1.3 Define your purpose.
1.4 Choose and narrow a subject.
1.5 Identify your genre and medium.

1.1 The Writing Situation

1.1 Analyze the writing situation.

Writing never happens in a vacuum. As a writer, you compose a project in response to some situation. For example, you may be asked to write a statement of purpose as part of an application to a college or degree program. You may need to write a cover letter to include with a résumé when you apply for a job. Or you may be assigned to write a lab report in a chemistry class. In each case, your writing responds to the needs of a specific **writing situation** (sometimes also called the **rhetorical situation**), and learning how to analyze a writing situation is an important skill.

Audience

- **Who will read your writing?** Will your readers be interested in your writing or not? If not, how can you make your writing interesting to them?
- **What do your readers already know and think about your subject?** What characteristics—such as education or political views—might influence their response?
- **Where and when will your audience encounter your writing?** Busy professionals in a workplace setting may have very different needs as readers than, say, a friend reading a personal narrative for enjoyment.
- **How should you project yourself in your writing?** What role should you play in relation to your readers, and what information should you provide? How informal or formal should your writing be?
- **What do you want readers to do or think after they read your writing?** How will you know if your writing has successfully connected with your audience?

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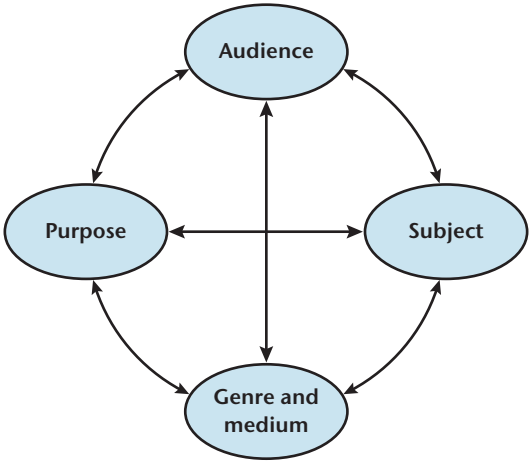
Figure 1.1 The elements of the writing situation



Purpose

- **What aim does your assignment specify?** For instance, does it ask you to explain a process or argue a position?
- **Why are you writing?** What do you need to achieve in your writing? Are you writing to fulfill an assignment, to express yourself, to provide information, to argue a case, or to propose a solution?
- **What do you want your work to accomplish?** What effect do you intend it to have on readers?

Subject

- **What does your writing assignment require you to write about?** If you don't have a specific assignment, what subjects might be appropriate for the situation?
- **What interests you about the subject?** What do you already know about it? What questions do you have about it?
- **What kinds of evidence will best suit your subject, purpose, audience, and genre?** What combination of facts, examples, and expert opinions will support your ideas?
- **Does your assignment require research?** Will you need to consult sources or conduct interviews, surveys, or experiments?
- **Even if research is not required, what information do you need to develop your subject?** How will you obtain it?

Genre and medium

- **What genre, or type of writing, does the assignment call for?** Are you to write an analysis, a report, a proposal, or some other type? Or are you free to choose a genre in which to write?

- **What are the conventions of the genre you are using?** For example, readers might expect a claim supported by evidence, a solution to a defined problem, clear description, or easy-to-find information.
- **What medium will you use to present your writing?** Will you deliver it on paper, online, or orally? What does the presentation method require in terms of preparation time, special skills, and use of technology?
- **What are the basic requirements of the writing task?** Consider requirements for length, deadline, subject, purpose, audience, and genre. What leeway do you have?
- **What format or method of presentation does the assignment specify or imply?** Does the situation call for a written essay, or can you use a slide presentation or other visual presentation?
- **How might you use illustrations, video, and other media to achieve your purpose?**
- **What documentation style should you use to cite your sources?**

1.2 Audience

1.2 Define and analyze your audience.

The readers likely to see your work—your **audience**—may influence your choice of subject and your definition of purpose. Your audience will certainly influence what you say about your subject and how you say it—for instance, how much background information you provide and whether you adopt a serious or a friendly tone.

For much academic and public writing, readers have specific needs and expectations. You still have many choices to make based on audience, but the options are somewhat defined. In other writing situations, the conventions are vaguer and the choices are more open. The following questions can help you define and make these choices.

Questions about audience

Identity and expectations

- **Who *are* my readers?**
- **What are my readers' expectations for the genre of my writing?** Do they expect features such as a particular organization and format, distinctive kinds of evidence, or a certain style of documenting sources?
- **What do I want readers to know or do after reading my work?** How should I make that clear to them?
- **How should I project myself to my readers?** How formal or informal will they expect me to be? What role and tone should I assume?

(continued)

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Questions about audience

(continued)

Characteristics, knowledge, and attitudes

- **What characteristics of readers are relevant for my subject and purpose?** For instance:

  Age and sex
  Occupation: students, professional colleagues, etc.
  Social or economic role: subject-matter experts, voters, car buyers, potential employers, etc.
  Economic or educational background
  Ethnic background
  Political, religious, or moral beliefs and values
  Hobbies or activities

- **How will the characteristics of readers influence their attitudes toward my subject?**
- **What do readers already know and *not* know about my subject?** How much do I have to tell them? What aspects of my subject will be interesting and relevant to them?
- **How should I handle any specialized terms?** Will readers know them? If not, should I define them?
- **What ideas, arguments, or information might surprise, excite, or offend readers?** How should I handle these points?
- **What misconceptions might readers have of my subject and/or my approach to it?** How can I dispel these misconceptions?

Uses and format

- **What will readers do with my writing?** Should I expect them to read every word from the top, to scan for information, or to look for conclusions? Can I help readers by providing a summary, headings, illustrations, or other aids?

1.3 Purpose

1.3 **Define your purpose.**

Your **purpose** in writing is your chief reason for communicating something about your subject to a particular audience of readers. It is your answer to a potential reader's question, "So what?"

Most writing you do will have one of four main purposes:

- **To entertain readers.**
- **To express your feelings or ideas.**
- **To inform or to explain something to readers (exposition).**
- **To persuade readers to accept or act on your opinion (argument).**

These purposes often overlap in a single essay, but usually one predominates. And the dominant purpose will influence your slant on your subject, the details you choose, and even the words you use.

Many writing assignments narrow the purpose by using a signal word, such as the following:

- **Report:** Survey, organize, and objectively present the available evidence on the subject.
- **Summarize:** Concisely state the main points in a text, argument, theory, or other work.
- **Discuss:** Examine the main points, competing views, or implications of the subject.
- **Compare and contrast:** Explain the similarities and differences between two subjects.
- **Define:** Specify the meaning of a term or a concept—distinctive characteristics, boundaries, and so on.
- **Analyze:** Identify the elements of the subject, and discuss how they work together.
- **Interpret:** Infer the subject's meaning or implications.
- **Evaluate:** Judge the quality or significance of the subject, considering pros and cons.
- **Argue:** Take a position on the subject, and support your position with evidence.

You can conceive of your purpose more specifically, too, in a way that incorporates your particular subject and the outcome you intend:

> To explain the methods and results of an engineering experiment so that readers understand and accept your conclusions
>
> To explain the reasons for a new policy on technology use in classrooms so that students understand why the guidelines are needed
>
> To persuade readers to support the college administration's plan for more required courses

1.4 Subject

1.4 Choose and narrow a subject.

A subject for writing has several basic requirements:

- **It should be suitable for the assignment.**
- **It should be neither too general nor too limited for the assigned deadline and paper length.**
- **It should be something that interests you and that you are willing to learn more about.**

When you receive an assignment, study its wording and its implications about your writing situation to guide your choice of subject:

- **What's wanted from you?** Many writing assignments contain words such as *argue, discuss, describe, analyze, report, explain, define, interpret,* or *evaluate.* These words specify your approach to your subject, the kind of thinking expected of you, your general purpose, and even what form your writing should take.

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- **For whom are you writing?** Many assignments will specify or imply your readers, but sometimes you will have to figure out for yourself who your audience is and what they expect of you.
- **What kind of research is required?** An assignment may specify the kinds of sources you are expected to consult, and you can use such information to choose your subject. (If you are unsure whether research is required, check with your instructor.)
- **Does the subject need to be narrowed?** To do the subject justice in the length and time required, you'll often need to limit it.

Answering some questions about your assignment will help you in setting boundaries for your choice of subject. Then you can explore your own interests and experiences to narrow the subject so that you can cover it adequately within the space and time assigned. Federal aid to college students could be the subject of a book; the kinds of aid available or why the government should increase aid would be a more appropriate subject for a four-page paper due in a week. Here are some guidelines for narrowing broad subjects:

- **Break your broad subject into as many specific subjects as you can think of.** Make a list.
- **For each specific subject that interests you and fits the assignment, roughly sketch out the main ideas.** Consider how many paragraphs or pages of specific facts, examples, and other details you would need to pin those ideas down. This thinking should give you at least a vague idea of how much work you'd have to do and how long the resulting paper might be.
- **Break a too-broad subject down further,** repeating the previous steps.

1.5 Genre and Medium

1.5 Identify your genre and medium.

Writers use familiar **genres**, or types of writing, to express their ideas. You can recognize many genres: the poems and novels of literature, the résumé in business writing, the news article about a sports event. In college you will be asked to write in a wide range of genres, such as analyses, lab reports, reviews, proposals, oral presentations, even blog posts.

When you receive a writing assignment, be sure to understand any requirements relating to genre:

- **Is a particular genre being assigned?** An assignment that asks you to write, say, an analysis, an argument, or a report has specified the genre for you to use.
- **What are the conventions of the genre?** Your instructor and/or your textbook will probably outline the requirements for you. You can also learn about a genre by reading samples of it.
- **What flexibility do you have?** Within their conventions, most genres still allow plenty of room for your own approach and

voice. Again, reading samples will show you much about your options.

Closely related to genre is the concept of **medium**. Medium refers to the technology or platform you might use to present a specific genre. For example, a proposal (genre) might be presented in the form of a written essay, a slide presentation, or an online video. Your choice of medium should be determined by the needs of the audience and by the other elements in the writing situation.

- **Is a medium being assigned?** Sometimes an assignment will specify that you deliver a project in a medium. You may be asked, for example, to deliver a proposal in the medium of a slide presentation.
- **What does your audience expect?** If your audience expects a formal written report, you may not want to deliver your project in the medium of a comic video. In other situations, your audience may welcome a more casual or innovative use of medium.
- **What flexibility do you have?** In some writing situations, you may have a choice of medium. You might decide, for example, that a process explanation showing nursing students how to insert an IV line would be better delivered as a video than as a detailed set of written instructions.

Chapter 2
Invention

Learning Objectives

2.1 Keep a journal.
2.2 Use freewriting to discover ideas.
2.3 Use brainstorming to develop ideas.
2.4 Use mind mapping to explore relationships among ideas.
2.5 Ask questions to generate ideas about a topic.

2.1 Journals

2.1 Keep a journal.

Writers use a host of strategies to help invent or discover ideas and information about their subjects. **Whichever of the following**

techniques you use, do your work in writing, not just in your head. Your ideas will then be retrievable, and the very act of writing will lead you to fresh insights.

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Culture and language

The discovery process encouraged here rewards rapid writing without a lot of thinking beforehand about what you will write or how. If your first language is not standard American English, you may find it helpful initially to do this exploratory writing in your native language or dialect and then to translate the worthwhile material for use in your drafts. This process can be productive, but it is extra work. You may want to try it at first and gradually move to composing in standard American English.

A **journal** is a diary of ideas kept on paper or on a computer. It gives you a place to record your responses, thoughts, and observations about what you read, see, hear, or experience. It can also provide ideas for writing. Because you are your own audience, you can work out your ideas without the pressure of an audience "out there" who will evaluate your journal entries for logic or organization or correctness. If you write every day, even just for a few minutes, the routine will loosen your writing muscles and improve your confidence.

You can use a journal for varied purposes: perhaps to confide your feelings, explore your responses to movies and other media, practice certain kinds of writing (such as poems or news stories), pursue ideas from your courses, or think critically about what you read. In a composition course, Erica Vela's instructor distributed "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" in which Nicholas Carr analyzes the effects of the Internet on reading and the human mind. The instructor's assignment calls for a response to reading.

Instructor's assignment

Nicholas Carr poses a question: "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" Carr argues that the Internet is changing the way we read and process information. He describes his own experience as a reader using a colorful metaphor: "Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski." The Internet, in short, is turning us into superficial readers who lack the capacity for sustained, deep engagement. As a college student, how do you respond to Carr's argument? How does the Internet affect the way you read? How does the Internet also affect your learning process and your interactions with other people?

On first reading the essay, Vela had found it convincing because Carr's description matched her own experience: she noticed her own tendency to get distracted when reading online. After rereading the essay, however, she was not persuaded that the picture was as dark as Carr suggests. She began to think of many benefits that come from reading online, and she began to develop her own angle on the topic in her journal.

Student's journal entry

Carr makes some excellent points. The Internet is absolutely changing the way I read and the way that I process information. It seems like I used to be able to read entire books in a single sitting, but now I struggle to read more than twenty pages at a time. Plus, I can't concentrate very well if I'm logged on the Internet. I tend to jump from Web site to Web site, constantly stimulating my brain with new information. However, I do see a benefit—especially as a college student. I've never set foot in the university library. I can complete my research through the online database, accessing scholarship from across the globe. I've also taken multiple online classes where I've interacted with my professors and classmates through video calls and online collaboration. I appreciate all the benefits of the Internet, but sometimes I miss curling up with a good book, too.

(Further examples of Vela's writing appear in the next three chapters.)

Culture and language

A journal can be especially helpful if your first language is not standard American English. You can practice writing to improve your fluency, try out sentence patterns, and experiment with vocabulary words. Equally important, you can experiment with applying what you know from experience to what you read and observe.

Sometimes you can find a good subject or good ideas by looking around you, not in the half-conscious way most of us move from place to place in our daily lives but deliberately, all senses alert. On a bus, for instance, are there certain types of passengers? What seems to be on the driver's mind? To get the most from observation, you should have a notepad and pen or a device available for taking notes and making sketches. Back at your desk, study your notes and sketches for oddities or patterns that you'd like to explore further.

2.2 Freewriting

2.2 **Use freewriting to discover ideas.**

2.2.1 Writing into a subject

Many writers find subjects or discover ideas by **freewriting**: writing without stopping for a certain amount of time (five to ten minutes) or to a certain length (one page). The goal of freewriting is to generate ideas and information from *within* yourself by going around the part of your mind that doesn't want to write or can't think of anything to write. You let words themselves suggest other words. *What* you write is not important; that you *keep* writing is. Don't stop, even if that means repeating the same words until new words come. Don't go back to reread, don't censor ideas that seem off-track or repetitious, and above all don't stop to edit: grammar, punctuation, spelling, and the like are irrelevant at this stage.

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If you can darken your screen, you can try **invisible writing** to keep moving forward while freewriting. As you type to a dark screen, the computer will record what you type but keep it from you and thus prevent you from tinkering with your prose. Invisible writing may feel uncomfortable at first, but it can free your mind and allow very creative results.

Culture and language

Invisible writing can be especially helpful if you are uneasy writing in standard English and you tend to worry about errors while writing. The blank computer screen leaves you no choice but to explore ideas without regard for their expression. If you choose to write with the monitor on, concentrate on *what* you want to say, not *how* you're saying it.

2.2.2 Focused freewriting

Focused freewriting is more concentrated: you start with your subject and write about it without stopping for, say, fifteen minutes or one full page. As in all freewriting, you push to bypass mental blocks and self-consciousness, not debating what to say or editing what you've written. With focused freewriting, though, you let the physical act of writing take you into and around your subject.

An example of focused freewriting can be found in Erica Vela's journal response to Nicholas Carr's "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" (2.1). Because she already had an idea about Carr's essay, Vela was able to start there and expand on the idea.

2.3 Brainstorming

2.3 Use brainstorming to develop ideas.

A method similar to freewriting is **brainstorming**—focusing intently on a subject for a fixed period (ten or fifteen minutes), pushing yourself to list every idea and detail that comes to mind. Like freewriting, brainstorming requires turning off your internal editor so that you keep moving ahead. (The technique of invisible writing, described above, can help you move forward.)

Following is an example of brainstorming by a student, Joyanna Logan. She was responding to the question *What can a summer internship offer?*

Student's brainstorming

summer internships offer—
real-world experience
learned how to communicate in the workplace after years of communicating as an academic

allowed (forced?) to work collaboratively with different teams
realized that the work in this field is difficult with little to no reward
decided to change majors—this field is absolutely not for me!
opportunity to build a professional network
Mrs. Queen: quiet but extremely intelligent; offered a lot of wisdom during my crisis of major
Mr. Jones: mean and nasty; do not want in network—only supervisors interacted with him on purpose
résumé entry
not in my field since major change, but still shows evidence of abilities
gained skills in résumé writing and job interviews
maybe use Mrs. Q as a reference?
possible job offer post-graduation
would not willingly work in that office—wait . . . maybe as a very last resort with no other options
confidence builder
applied skills learned at university to workplace
challenged to meet and interact with new people—can be difficult as an introvert

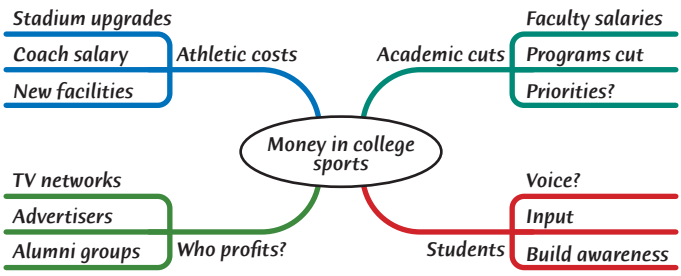
2.4 Mind Mapping

2.4 Use mind mapping to explore relationships among ideas.

Like freewriting and brainstorming, the technique of **mind mapping** uses free association to produce rapid, unedited work. But it emphasizes the relations between ideas by combining writing and nonlinear drawing. Start with your topic at a center point and then radiate outward with ideas. Pursue related ideas in a branching structure until you have exhausted that line of thinking. Then do the same with other ideas, continuously branching out or drawing arrows to show connections.

Figure 2.1 shows how Daquan Cook used the technique for ten minutes to expand on the topic of money in college football, an idea he developed through freewriting (2.2).

Figure 2.1 Mind mapping



2.5 Questions

dev 2.5

2.5 Ask questions to generate ideas about a topic.

Asking yourself a set of questions about your subject—and writing out the answers—can help you look at the subject objectively and see fresh possibilities in it.

2.5.1 Journalist's questions

A journalist with a story to report poses a set of questions:

- **Who was involved?**
- **What happened, and what were the results?**
- **When did it happen?**
- **Where did it happen?**
- **Why did it happen?**
- **How did it happen?**

These questions can also be useful in probing an essay subject, especially when you are examining causes and effects or telling a story.

2.5.2 Questions about patterns

We understand a vast range of subjects through patterns such as narration, classification, and comparison and contrast. Asking questions based on the patterns can help you view your subject from many angles. Sometimes you may want to develop an entire essay using just one pattern.

- **How did it happen?** (Narration)
- **How does it look, sound, feel, smell, taste?** (Description)
- **What are examples of it or reasons for it?** (Illustration or support)
- **What is it? What does it encompass, and what does it exclude?** (Definition)
- **What are its parts or characteristics?** (Division or analysis)
- **What groups or categories can it be sorted into?** (Classification)
- **How is it like, or different from, other things?** (Comparison and contrast)
- **Why did it happen? What results did or could it have?** (Cause-and-effect analysis)
- **How do you do it, or how does it work?** (Process analysis)

Chapter 3
Thesis and Organization

Learning Objectives

3.1 Develop a thesis statement.
3.2 Organize your ideas.

3.1 Thesis

3.1 Develop a thesis statement.

Your readers will expect your essay to be focused on and controlled by a main idea, or **thesis**. The thesis is the intellectual position you are taking on your topic. Often you will express the thesis in a one- or two-sentence **thesis statement** toward the beginning of your paper.

As an expression of the thesis, the thesis statement serves five important functions.

Functions of the thesis statement

- **The thesis statement narrows your subject to a single, central idea.**
- **It claims something specific and significant about your subject.**
- **It conveys your purpose for writing.**
- **It establishes your voice and stance toward your readers.**
- **It previews the arrangement of ideas in your essay.** (Not all thesis statements work as a preview, but many do.)

3.1.1 Formulating a thesis question

A thesis statement probably will not leap fully formed into your head. You can start on it by posing a **thesis question** to help you figure out your position, organize your ideas, start drafting, and stay on track.

Consider again Erica Vela's assignment:

> As a college student, how do you respond to Carr's argument? How does the Internet affect the way you read? How does the Internet also affect your learning process and your interactions with other people?

Responding to the assignment, Vela first rephrased it as two questions:

> To what extent do I agree or disagree with Carr's argument that the Internet is changing the way we read and process information?
>
> How have my learning process and personal interactions changed?

3.1.2 Drafting a thesis statement

dev 3.1

Drafting a thesis statement can occur at almost any time in the writing process. Some instructors suggest that students develop a thesis statement when they have a good stock of ideas, to give a definite sense of direction. Other instructors suggest that students work with their thesis question at least through drafting, to keep their options open. And no matter when it's drafted, a thesis statement can change during the writing process, as the writer discovers ideas and expresses them in sentences.

Erica Vela chose to try writing her thesis statement before drafting. Working from her thesis question, she wrote a sentence that named a topic and made a claim about it:

> The ability to shrink the globe and bring information and education to my fingertips proves that Nicholas Carr's reservations about the Internet are shortsighted.

Vela's topic is the influence of the Internet on reading and learning, and her claim is that Carr's argument is too pessimistic. Although Vela later revised her thesis statement, this draft statement gave her direction, and she used it in the first draft of her paper.

Following are more examples of thesis questions and answering thesis statements. Each statement consists of a topic and a claim. Notice how each statement also expresses purpose. Statements 1–2 are **explanatory**: the writers mainly want to explain something to readers. Statements 3–4 are **argumentative**: the authors mainly want to convince readers of something. Most of the thesis statements you write in college papers will be either explanatory or argumentative.

Thesis question	Explanatory thesis statement
1. Why did Abraham Lincoln delay in emancipating the slaves?	Lincoln delayed emancipating any slaves until 1863 because his primary goal was to restore and preserve the Union, with or without slavery. [**Topic:** Lincoln's delay. **Claim:** was caused by his goal of preserving the Union.]
2. What steps can prevent juvenile crime?	Juveniles can be diverted from crime by active learning programs, full-time sports, frequent contact with positive role models, and intervention by consistent mentors. [**Topic:** juvenile crime. **Claim:** can be prevented in four ways.]
3. Why should drivers' use of cell phones be banned?	Drivers' use of cell phones should be outlawed because people who talk and drive at the same time cause accidents. [**Topic:** drivers' use of cell phones. **Claim:** should be outlawed because it causes accidents.]

4. Which college students should be entitled to federal aid?	As an investment in its own economy, the federal government should provide a tuition grant to any college student who qualifies academically. [**Topic:** federal aid. **Claim:** should be provided to any college student who qualifies academically.]

Note that statement 2 previews the organization of the essay. Readers often appreciate such a preview, and students often prefer it because it helps them organize their main points during drafting.

Thesis statement

Juveniles can be diverted from crime by active learning programs, full-time sports, frequent contact with positive role models, and intervention by consistent mentors.

Organization of essay

Discussion one by one of four ways to reduce juvenile crime.

Culture and language

In some cultures it is considered rude or unnecessary for a writer to state his or her main idea outright. When writing in standard American English for school or work, you can assume that readers expect a clear and early idea of what you think.

3.1.3 Revising the thesis statement

You may have to write and rewrite a thesis statement before you come to a conclusion about your position. Erica Vela used her draft thesis statement in the first draft of her paper, but it didn't work well at that stage. She saw that it put too little emphasis on her actual topic (*the benefits of online reading*) and overstated her disagreement with Carr (*proves . . . is shortsighted*). After several revisions, Vela responded to a peer reviewer's suggestion that she state her disagreement with Carr more clearly:

> My experience of online education offers a benefit that Nicholas Carr overlooks: the Internet provides more opportunities for learning in areas where there are no well-stocked libraries or centers of higher education while offering more ways to access information from across the globe.

As you draft and revise your thesis statement, ask the following questions:

Checklist for revising the thesis statement

- **How well does the subject of your statement capture the subject of your writing?**

(continued)

dev 3.1

Checklist for revising the thesis statement

(continued)

- **What claim does your statement make about your subject?**
- **What is the significance of the claim?** How does it answer "So what?" and convey your purpose?
- **How can the claim be limited or made more specific?** Does it state a single idea and clarify the boundaries of the idea?
- **How unified is the statement?** How does each word and phrase contribute to a single idea?
- **How well does the statement preview the organization of your writing?**

Here are examples of thesis statements revised to meet these requirements:

Original	Revised
This new product brought in over $300,000 last year. [A statement of fact, not a claim about the product: what is significant about the product's success?]	This new product succeeded because of its innovative marketing campaign, including widespread press coverage, in-store entertainment, and a consumer newsletter.
People should not go on fad diets. [A vague statement that needs limiting with one or more reasons: what's wrong with fad diets?]	Fad diets can be dangerous when they deprive the body of essential nutrients or rely excessively on potentially harmful foods.
Televised sports are different from live sports. [A general statement that needs to be made more specific: how are they different, and why is the difference significant?]	Although television cannot transmit all the excitement of a live game, its closeups and slow-motion replays reveal much about the players and the strategy of the game.
Cell phones can be convenient, but they can also be dangerous. [Not unified: how do the two parts of the sentence relate to each other?]	The convenience of cell phones does not justify the risks of driving while talking or texting.

Exercise 3.1 Evaluating thesis statements

Evaluate the thesis statements below considering whether each is limited, specific, and unified. Rewrite the items as needed to meet these goals.

1. Aggression usually leads to violence, injury, and even death, and we should use it constructively.

2. The religion of Islam is widely misunderstood in the United States.
3. One evening of a radio talk show amply illustrates both the appeal of such shows and their silliness.
4. Manners are a kind of social glue.
5. The poem is about motherhood.
6. Television is useful for children and a mindless escape for adults who do not want to think about their problems.
7. I disliked American history in high school, but I like it in college.
8. Drunken drivers, whose perception and coordination are impaired, should receive mandatory suspensions of their licenses.
9. Business is a good major for many students.
10. The state's lenient divorce laws undermine the institution of marriage, which is fundamental to our culture, and they should certainly be made stricter for couples who have children.

3.2 Organization

3.2 Organize your ideas.

Most essays share a basic pattern of introduction (states the subject), body (develops the subject), and conclusion (pulls the essay's ideas together). Introductions and conclusions are discussed in Chapter 7. Within the body, every paragraph develops some aspect of the essay's main idea, or thesis. See Chapter 4 for Erica Vela's essay, with annotations highlighting the body's pattern of support for the thesis statement.

Culture and language

If you are not used to reading and writing American academic prose, its pattern of introduction-body-conclusion and the organization schemes discussed below may seem unfamiliar. For instance, instead of introductions that focus quickly on the topic and thesis, you may be used to openings that establish personal connections with readers. And instead of body paragraphs that stress general points and support those points with evidence, you may be used to general statements without support (because writers can assume that readers will supply the evidence themselves) or to evidence without explanation (because writers can assume that readers will infer the general points). When writing American academic prose, you need to take into account readers' expectations for directness and for the statement and support of general points.

3.2.1 The general and the specific

To organize material for an essay, you need to distinguish general and specific ideas and see the relations between ideas. General and specific refer to the number of instances or objects included

in a group signified by a word. The following "ladder" illustrates a general-to-specific hierarchy:

Most general
life form
plant
rose
Uncle Dan's prize-winning American Beauty rose
Most specific

As you arrange your material, pick out the general ideas and then the specific points that support them. Set aside points that seem irrelevant to your key ideas. On a computer you can easily experiment with various arrangements of general ideas and supporting information: save your master list of ideas to a new file, and then move material around.

3.2.2 Schemes for organizing essays

An essay's body paragraphs may be arranged in many ways that are familiar to readers. The choice depends on your subject, purpose, and audience.

- **Spatial:** In describing a person, place, or thing, move through space systematically from a starting point to other features—for instance, top to bottom, near to far, left to right.
- **Chronological:** In recounting a sequence of events, arrange the events as they actually occurred in time, first to last.
- **General to specific:** Begin with an overall discussion of the subject; then fill in details, facts, examples, and other support.
- **Specific to general:** First provide the support; then draw a conclusion from it.
- **Climactic:** Arrange ideas in order of increasing importance to your thesis or increasing interest to the reader.
- **Problem-solution:** First outline a problem that needs to be solved; then propose a solution.

3.2.3 Outlines

It's not essential to craft a detailed outline before you begin drafting an essay; in fact, too detailed a plan could prevent you from discovering ideas while you draft. Still, even a rough scheme can show you patterns of general and specific, suggest proportions, and highlight gaps or overlaps in coverage.

There are several kinds of outlines, some more flexible than others.

Scratch or informal outline

A **scratch outline** lists the key points of the paper in the order they will be covered. Here are Erica Vela's thesis statement and scratch outline for her essay on reading and learning online:

Thesis statement

My experience of online education offers a benefit that Nicholas Carr overlooks: the Internet provides more opportunities for learning in areas where there are no well-stocked libraries or centers of higher education while offering more ways to access information from across the globe.

Scratch outline

Changes in how we process information
- Carr's reservations
- My experiences

My educational experience
- Long-distance research
- Online student
- Personal interactions

Tree diagram

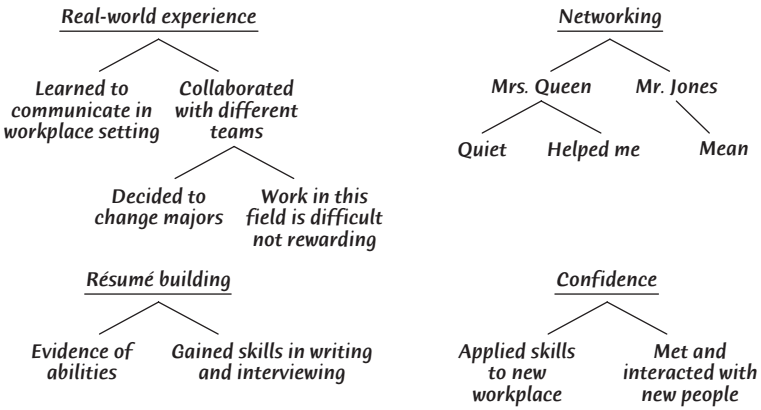
In a **tree diagram**, ideas and details branch out in increasing specificity. Like any outline, the diagram can warn of gaps, overlaps, and digressions. But unlike more linear outlines, it can be supplemented and extended indefinitely, so it is easy to alter for new ideas and arrangements discovered during drafting and revision.

Following are a thesis statement and tree diagram by Joyanna Logan, based on her earlier brainstorming about a summer job.

Thesis statement

Spending eight weeks in an internship saved me thousands of dollars and gave me a head start on my career.

Figure 3.1 A sample tree diagram



Formal outline

A formal outline not only lays out main ideas and their support but also shows the relative importance of all the essay's elements and

how they connect with one another. Erica Vela created this formal outline on the basis of her scratch outline above.

dev 3.2

Thesis statement

My experience of online education offers a benefit that Nicholas Carr overlooks: the Internet provides more opportunities for learning in areas where there are no well-stocked libraries or centers of higher education while offering more ways to access information from across the globe.

Formal outline

I. Summary of Carr's article
   A. Reasons for concern
      1. Damaging attention and concentration
      2. Removing the human element in thinking process
   B. Contexts for Carr's article
      1. Carr's age and personal experience
      2. Transition from print to digital reading
II. My online learning experiences
   A. Rural access to information
      1. Online libraries and databases
         a. Distance from campus and public libraries
         b. Access to full text sources through online databases and archives
      2. Online stores
   B. Online post-secondary education
      1. Online classes
      2. Online interaction with professors/peers
III. Comparisons with other technological advancements
   A. Plato's *Phaedrus* and the development of writing
   B. The printing press and the development of the publishing industry

This example illustrates several principles of outlining that can help ensure completeness, balance, and clear relationships. (These principles largely depend on distinguishing between the general and the specific.)

- **All the outline's parts are systematically indented and labeled.** Roman numerals (I, II) label primary divisions of the essay, followed by capital letters (A, B) for secondary divisions, Arabic numerals (1, 2) for principal supporting points, and small letters (a, b) for supporting details, as needed. Each succeeding level contains more specific information than the one before it.
- **The outline divides the material into several groups.**
- **Within each part of the outline, distinct topics of equal generality appear in parallel headings.**
- **All subdivided headings in the outline break into at least two parts** because a topic cannot logically be divided into only one part. Any single subdivision should be matched with another subdivision, combined with the heading above it, or rechecked for its relevance to the heading above it.

- **All headings are expressed in parallel grammatical form.** Vela's is a **topic outline**, in which the headings consist of a noun with modifiers. In a **sentence outline** all headings are expressed as full sentences.
- **The outline covers only the body of the essay, omitting the introduction and the conclusion.** The beginning and the ending are important in the essay itself, but you need not include them in the outline unless you are required to do so or you anticipate special problems with their organization.

3.2.4 Unity and coherence

Two qualities of effective writing relate to organization: unity and coherence. When you perceive that someone's writing "flows well," you are probably appreciating these qualities.

To check an outline or draft for **unity**, ask these questions:

- **Is each section relevant to the main idea (thesis) of the essay?**
- **Within main sections, does each example or detail support the principal idea of that section?**

To check your outline or draft for **coherence**, ask the following questions:

- **Do the ideas follow a clear sequence?**
- **Are the parts of the essay logically connected?**
- **Are the connections clear and smooth?**

The following informative essay illustrates several ways of achieving unity and coherence (described in the annotations).

Athletics or Academics: Setting Priorities at Colleges and Universities

College athletics is a booming business throughout many publicly funded colleges and universities, particularly sports like football and basketball. These programs bring in millions of dollars in revenue from ticket and merchandise sales, televised events, profit-sharing conferences, and donations from wealthy fans and alumni. Yet many of these same athletic departments are losing money and depend on college and university budgets to make up the difference.

Introduction establishes subject of essay

Informative thesis statement

So how does a college or university repair that kind of deficit? Athletic departments are rarely asked to curb their own spending. Stadiums and other athletic facilities are replaced or renovated regularly, in an effort to stay in step with other programs. Private planes are purchased to aid in recruiting. Some head coaches earn millions of dollars a year—more than the college or university chancellor, and in some cases, more than any other public employee in the state.

Question is linked to thesis statement

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Publicly funded colleges and universities are funded by state revenues—in other words, tax dollars. Politicians of all stripes might publicly support the athletic programs in their state, wearing branded merchandise and making appearances at games, but most are reluctant to ask for a tax increase to support these same programs. Therefore, university budgets remain relatively stagnant as athletic department spending increases.

Paragraph idea, linked to thesis statement

Question introduces new paragraph, linked to thesis statement

So how do colleges and universities find money in their budgets? They often start by attempting to increase revenue streams. Tuition seldom remains static at colleges and universities. Increases in tuition are often used to offset discretionary spending. In other words, these funds can be funneled to any area that needs additional money. If raising tuition isn't an option, some colleges and universities increase student fees to support the athletic department.

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

Transition and new paragraph idea, linked to thesis statement

If revenue streams have been exhausted, it's time to cut the academic budget. One way to reduce spending in academic departments is through payroll. Some colleges and universities choose to replace full-time faculty with part-time adjunct professors who are not entitled to employee benefits like health care or retirement. Academic departments might also reduce some class sections or eliminate some classes entirely.

Paragraph developed with evidence supporting its idea

What are the priorities at colleges and universities? Is the emphasis athletic achievement or academic success? When colleges and universities funnel money away from academics and toward athletics, it sends a strong message to everyone—they do not value scholarship. Perhaps if scholarship could sell tickets or merchandise or be highlighted on ESPN, it would be more highly valued.

Conclusion echoing thesis statement and summarizing

—Daquan Cook (student)

See also Chapter 7 on unity and coherence in paragraphs.

Exercise 3.2 Organizing ideas

The following list of ideas was extracted by a student from freewriting he did for a brief paper on soccer in the United States. Using his thesis statement as a guide, pick out the general ideas and arrange the relevant specific points under them. In some cases you may have to infer general ideas to cover specific points in the list.

Thesis statement

Although its growth in the United States has been slow and halting, professional soccer may finally be poised to become a major American sport.

List of ideas

In countries of South and Latin America, soccer is the favorite sport.
In the United States, the success of a sport depends largely on its ability to attract huge TV audiences.

Soccer was not often presented on US television.
In 2010 and 2014, the World Cup final was broadcast on ABC and on Spanish-language Univision.
In the past, professional soccer could not get a foothold in the United States because of poor TV coverage and lack of financial backing.
The growing Hispanic population in the United States could help soccer grow as well.
Investors have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the top US professional league.
Potential fans did not have a chance to see soccer games.
Failures of early start-up leagues made potential backers wary of new ventures.
Recently, the outlook for professional soccer has changed dramatically.
The US television audience for the 2014 US–Ghana match was larger than the average US television audience for baseball's World Series.

Chapter 4
Drafting

Learning Objectives

4.1 Compose a first draft.
4.2 Analyze a sample first draft.

4.1 First Draft

4.1 **Compose a first draft.**

Drafting is an occasion for exploration. Don't expect to transcribe solid thoughts into polished prose: solidity and polish will come with revision and editing. Instead, while drafting let the very act of writing help you find and form your meaning.

4.1.1 Starting a draft

Beginning a draft sometimes takes courage, even for professionals. Procrastination may actually help if you let ideas for writing simmer at the same time. At some point, though, you'll have to face the blank paper or screen. The following techniques can help you begin:

- **Read over what you've already written**—notes, outlines, and so on. Immediately start your draft with whatever comes to mind.
- **Freewrite.**

- **Skip the opening and start in the middle.** Or write the conclusion.
- **Write a paragraph.** Explain what you think your essay will be about when you finish it.
- **Start writing the part that you understand best.** Using your outline, divide your work into chunks—say, one for the introduction, another for the first point, and so on. One of these chunks may call out to be written.

4.1.2 Maintaining momentum

Drafting requires momentum: the forward movement opens you to fresh ideas and connections. To keep moving while drafting, try one or more of these techniques:

- **Set aside enough time.** For a brief essay, a first draft is likely to take at least an hour or two.
- **Work in a quiet place.**
- **If you must stop working, write down what you plan to do next.** Then you can pick up where you stopped with minimal disruption.
- **Be as fluid as possible.** Spontaneity will allow your attitudes toward your subject to surface naturally in your sentences.
- **Keep going.** Skip over sticky spots; leave a blank if you can't find the right word; put alternative ideas or phrasings in brackets so that you can reconsider them later. If an idea pops out of nowhere but doesn't seem to fit in, quickly jot it down, or write it into the draft and bracket or boldface it for later attention.
- **Resist self-criticism.** Don't worry about your grammar, spelling, and the like. Don't worry about what your readers will think. These are very important matters, but save them for revision.
- **Use your thesis statement and outline.** They can remind you of your planned purpose, organization, and content. However, if your writing leads you in a more interesting direction, follow.

If you write on a computer, frequently save the text you're drafting—at least every five or ten minutes and every time you leave the computer.

4.2 Sample Draft

4.2 Analyze a sample first draft.

Following is Erica Vela's first-draft response to Nicholas Carr's "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" As part of her assignment, Vela showed the draft to four classmates, whose suggestions for revision appear in the margin of the draft. They used the Comment function of *Microsoft Word*, which allows users to add comments without inserting words into the document's text. Notice that her classmates ignore errors in grammar and punctuation, concentrating instead on larger issues such as thesis, clarity of ideas, and unity.

Responding to Carr

In "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" Nicholas Carr argues that the Internet is changing our minds at a fundamental level, possibly creating more problems than it solves. He states that the Internet is damaging the way we process information, creating minds that struggle to remain focused on a given task for an extended time. The ability to shrink the globe and bring information and education to my fingertips proves that Nicholas Carr's reservations about the Internet are shortsighted.

Carr describes his experience as "an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with [his] brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory" (para. 2). He laments his inability to focus on extended tasks. He worries that this focus on the Internet and technology is removing the human element from our thinking processes and replacing it with computerization.

Like Carr, I remember what life was like before the Internet. I remember driving to the local library and poring over their card catalog, looking for books that held the information that I needed. If the library did not have the appropriate books, I would have to begin the extended process of interlibrary loan or travel hundreds of miles to a college or university library. But now, I can search a library's database, *Amazon*, or *Google* and find dozens (or even hundreds) of books, journal articles, or Web sites. Some I can read immediately. Others I can order and have shipped to my house within two days. The sharing of knowledge across the globe cannot be a bad thing.

Moreover, the Internet provides other opportunities for learning. Colleges and universities in the United States are building classrooms and degree programs online, allowing students from across the globe to obtain post-secondary educations in a world that increasingly demands them. In my degree program, all classes meet online. It allows me to work full-time while living nearly two hundred miles away from the main campus. I also get personal interaction with my professors and classmates through online discussion boards and video conferencing applications. Without the Internet, I would not be a student today.

Comment [Jason]: Your title doesn't really say what your essay is about, other than being a response to Carr.

Comment [Philip]: I think you need to add a citation for this source.

Comment [Makaila]: There almost seems to be something missing here. This sentence jumps to your thesis about the good things about the Internet but the intro does not lead in to that thesis.

Comment [Jason]: So your personal experience proves Carr is wrong? Your thesis statement is confusing to me. What does shortsighted mean here?

Comment [Davida]: Does Carr give any evidence of this besides his own personal experiences?

Comment [Makaila]: How does your own experience relate to your thesis? Can you explain that better?

Comment [Philip]: This paragraph goes from your personal experience to this broad statement very fast. How do we know that your experience really supports this idea?

Comment [Davida]: This is a strong statement. Make sure you explain how it relates to your main thesis.

rev
5.1

Like Carr, I believe the Internet is changing how we think, but I believe that these changes will be a benefit in the future. As Carr notes, Socrates worried about the development of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*. He believed that our ability to remember things would be permanently destroyed, but he couldn't foresee how writing would spread ideas, ultimately expanding human knowledge. A similar situation arose after the development of the printing press. Critics argued that "cheaply printed books . . . would undermine religious authority, demean the work of scholars and scribes, and spread sedition and debauchery" (para. 31). Can you imagine the world without books? It's a ridiculous thought today.

Comment [Jason]: I got lost in this paragraph. How did we get from changes being a benefit to talking about books?

We know that the world of the future will look much different than it does today, and the development of the Internet will have much influence on its development. However, we must not fear technological advancement and the spread of new knowledge while clinging to older technologies with the tips of our fingers. As humans, we have learned human speech, developed writing, invented printing, and now we are creating digital spaces and information. We can appreciate what we have while embracing what is to come. Our future depends on it.

Comment [Makaila]: This is very broad. Maybe focus more on Carr and restate your main idea?

Comment [Philip]: How does this conclusion relate to Carr and your main point? It seems like a lot of big ideas but I don't see how they exactly support your thesis.

Chapter 5
Revising

Learning Objectives

5.1 Read your work critically and plan your revision.
5.2 Give and receive feedback to guide revision.
5.3 Analyze a revised draft.

5.1 Revision Plans

5.1 Read your work critically and plan your revision.

Revising is an essential task in creating an effective piece of writing. During revision—literally, "re-seeing"—you shift your focus outward

from yourself and your subject toward your readers, concentrating on what will help them respond as you want. Many writers revise in two stages: first they view the work as a whole, evaluating and improving its overall meaning and structure (this chapter); then they edit sentences for wording, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so on (next chapter).

In revising your writing, you may work alone or you may receive input from your instructor and/or other students in a collaborative group. Whether you are responding to your own evaluation or that of readers, you may need to rethink your thesis, move or delete whole paragraphs, clarify how ideas relate to the thesis, or support ideas with details or further research. Knowing that you will edit later gives you the freedom to look beyond the confines of the page or screen to see the paper as a whole.

To revise your writing, you have to read it critically, and that means you have to create some distance between your draft and yourself. These techniques may help you to see your work objectively:

- **Take a break after finishing the draft.** A few hours may be enough; a whole night or day is preferable.
- **Ask someone to respond to your draft.** A roommate, family member, or tutor in the writing center can call attention to what needs revising.
- **Read your draft in a new medium.** Typing a handwritten draft or printing out a word-processed draft can reveal weaknesses that you didn't see in the original.
- **Outline your draft.** Highlight the main points supporting the thesis, and convert these sentences to outline form. Then examine the outline you've made for logical order, gaps, and digressions. A formal outline can be especially illuminating because of its careful structure.
- **Listen to your draft.** Read the draft out loud to yourself or to a friend or classmate, record and listen to it, or have someone read the draft to you.
- **Use a revision checklist.** Don't try to re-see everything in your draft at once. Use the "Checklist for revision," making a separate pass through the draft for each item.

Checklist for revision

Assignment

How have you responded to the assignment for this writing? Verify that your subject, purpose, and genre are appropriate for the requirements of the assignment.

Purpose

What is the purpose of your writing? Does it conform to the assignment? Is it consistent throughout the paper?

(continued)

Checklist for revision

(continued)

Audience

How does the writing address the intended audience? How does it meet readers' likely expectations for your subject? Where might readers need more information?

Genre

How does your writing conform to the conventions of the genre you're writing in—features such as organization, kinds of evidence, language, and format?

Thesis

What is the thesis of your writing? Where does it become clear? How well do thesis and paper match: Does any part of the paper stray from the thesis? Does the paper fulfill the commitment of the thesis?

Organization

What are the main points of the paper? (List them.) How well does each support the thesis? How effective is their arrangement for the paper's purpose?

Development

How well do details, examples, and other evidence support each main point? Where, if at all, might readers find support skimpy or have trouble understanding the content?

Unity

What does each sentence and paragraph contribute to the thesis? Where, if at all, do digressions occur? Should they be cut, or can they be rewritten to support the thesis?

Coherence

How clearly and smoothly does the paper flow? Where does it seem rough or awkward? Can any transitions be improved?

Title, introduction, conclusion

How accurately and interestingly does the title reflect the essay's content? How well does the introduction engage and focus readers' attention? How effective is the conclusion in providing a sense of completion?

5.1.1 Writing a title

The revision stage is a good time to consider a title because summing up your essay in a phrase focuses your attention sharply on your topic, purpose, and audience. The title should tell the reader what your paper is about, but it should not restate the assignment or the thesis. Most titles fall into one of these categories:

- **A *descriptive title* announces the subject clearly and accurately.** Such a title is almost always appropriate, and it is usually expected

for academic writing. Erica Vela chose to title her essay "*Google* Opens Our Minds—and Our Worlds," for example.

- **A *suggestive title* hints at the subject to arouse curiosity.** Such a title is common in popular magazines and may be appropriate for writing that is somewhat informal. Vela could have used a suggestive metaphor in her response to Carr: "Jet-Skiing into the Future," for example.

5.2 Peer Review

5.2 Give and receive feedback to guide revision.

Peer review is a common practice in many college writing courses. Learning to give and receive helpful feedback is an important skill, and working in a collaborative environment will build skills that will help you in your career, too. Collaborative peer review may occur face to face in small groups, on paper via drafts and comments, or online, either through a course-management system such as *Blackboard* or *Canvas* or through a class blog, e-mail list, or wiki.

Whatever the medium of collaboration, following a few guidelines will help you gain more from others' comments and become a more constructive reader yourself.

Benefiting from comments on your writing

- **Think of your readers as counselors or coaches.** They can help you see the virtues and flaws in your work and sharpen your awareness of readers' needs.
- **Read or listen to comments closely.**
- **Know what the critic is saying.** If you need more information, ask for it, or consult the appropriate section of this handbook.
- **Don't become defensive.** Letting comments offend you will only erect a barrier to improvement in your writing. As one writing teacher advises, "Leave your ego at the door."
- **Revise your work in response to appropriate comments.** You will learn more from the act of revision than from just thinking about changes.
- **Remember that you are the final authority on your work.** You should be open to suggestions, but you are free to decline advice when you think it is inappropriate.
- **Keep track of both the strengths and the weaknesses others identify.** Then in later assignments you can build on your successes and give special attention to problem areas.

Commenting on others' writing

- **Be sure you know what the writer is saying.** If necessary, summarize the paper to understand its content.

- **Address only your most significant concerns with the work.** Focus on the deep issues in other writers' drafts, especially early drafts: thesis, purpose, audience, organization, and support for the thesis. Use the revision checklist as a guide to what is significant. Unless you have other instructions, ignore mistakes in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and the like. (The temptation to focus on such errors may be especially strong if the writer is less experienced than you are with standard American English.) Emphasizing mistakes will contribute little to the writer's revision.
- **Remember that you are the reader, not the writer.** Don't edit sentences, add details, or otherwise assume responsibility for the paper.
- **Phrase your comments carefully.** Avoid misunderstandings by making sure comments are both clear and respectful. If you are responding on paper or online, not face to face with the writer, remember that the writer has nothing but your written words to go on. He or she can't ask you for immediate clarification and can't infer your attitudes from gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice.
- **Be specific.** If something confuses you, say *why*. If you disagree with a conclusion, say *why*.
- **Be supportive as well as honest.** Tell the writer what you like about the paper. Phrase your comments positively: instead of *This paragraph doesn't interest me,* say *You have an interesting detail here that I almost missed.* Question the writer in a way that emphasizes the effect of the work on you, the reader: *This paragraph confuses me because*. . . . And avoid measuring the work against a set of external standards: *This essay is poorly organized. Your thesis statement is inadequate.*
- **While reading, make your comments in writing.** Even if you will be delivering your comments in person later on, the written record will help you recall what you thought.
- **Link comments to specific parts of a paper.** Especially if you are reading the paper on a computer, be clear about what in the paper each comment relates to. You can use a word processor's Comment function, which annotates documents.

Culture and language

In some cultures writers do not expect criticism from readers, or readers do not expect to think and speak critically about what they read. If critical responses are uncommon in your native culture, collaboration may at first be uncomfortable for you. As a writer, think of a draft or even a final paper more as an exploration of ideas than as the last word on your subject; then you may be more receptive to readers' suggestions. As a reader, know that your tactful questions and suggestions about focus, content, and organization will usually be considered appropriate.

5.3 Sample Revision

5.3 Analyze a revised draft.

rev 5.3

Erica Vela was satisfied with her first draft: she had her ideas down, and the arrangement seemed logical. Still, from the revision checklist she knew the draft needed work, and her classmates' comments highlighted what she needed to focus on. The following revised draft shows Vela's changes in response to these comments. She used the Track Changes function on her word processor, so that deletions are crossed out and additions are in blue.

Google Opens Our Minds—and Our Worlds

New, descriptive title names topic and previews approach.

In "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" Nicholas Carr laments that he was once "a scuba diver in the sea of words," but now he "zip[s] along the surface like a guy on a jet ski" (par. 4). He believes ~~argues~~ that the Internet is changing our minds at a fundamental level, ~~possibly creating more problems than it solves. He states that the Internet is~~ damaging the way we process information and ~~,~~ creating minds that struggle to remain focused on a given task for an extended time. Yet the Internet is changing more than how we process information. It is changing how we access and share information as well as how we interact with people across the globe. My experience of online education offers a benefit that Nicholas Carr overlooks: the Internet provides more opportunities for learning in areas where there are no well-stocked libraries or centers of higher education while offering more ways to access information from across the globe. ~~The ability to shrink the globe and bring information and education to my fingertips proves that Nicholas Carr's reservations about the Internet are shortsighted.~~

Expanded introduction moves from an overview of Carr's argument to Vela's disagreement with it, building to a thesis statement at the end of the paragraph.

Expanded and clarified response to Carr, ending in a revised thesis.

Carr describes his experience as "an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with [his] brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory" (par. 2). He laments his inability to focus on extended tasks. He worries that this focus on the Internet and technology is removing the human element from our thinking processes and, as sociologist Daniel Bell might suggest, replacing it with computerization (par. 14).

Expanded summary of Carr's essay, including quotations cited in MLA style.

Like Carr, I remember what life was like before the Internet. I live in a remote area, hundreds of miles from any college, university, or center of learning. I remember driving to the small local library and poring over their ancient card catalog, looking for books that held the information that I needed. If the library did not have the ~~appropriate~~ needed books, I would have to begin the extended process of interlibrary loan or travel hundreds of miles to ~~a college or~~ the closest university library. But now I can search a library's database, *Amazon*, or *Google* and find dozens (or even hundreds) of books, journal articles, or Web sites. Some I can read immediately. Others

New sentences expand on Vela's claims and connect back to her thesis.

I can order and have shipped to my house within two days. In this way and others, the Internet makes knowledge accessible across the globe. In most cases, you no longer need access to the physical source; you only need an access to the World Wide Web. Surely, Carr would agree that more equal and open access to information is a good thing. ~~The sharing of knowledge across the globe cannot be a bad thing.~~

Moreover, the Internet provides other opportunities for learning. Colleges and universities in the United States are building classrooms and degree programs online, allowing students from across the globe to obtain post-secondary educations in a world that increasingly demands them. In my degree program, all classes meet online. It allows me to work full-time while living nearly two hundred miles away from the main campus. I also get personal interaction with my professors and classmates through online discussion boards and video conferencing applications. Without the Internet, I would not have access to a post-secondary education and would not be a student today.

Revised wording here sharpens Vela's claim about the importance of the Internet to her own education.

Like Carr, I believe the Internet is changing how we think, but I believe that these changes will be a benefit in the future. As Carr notes, Socrates worried about the development of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*. He believed that our ability to remember things would be permanently destroyed, but he couldn't foresee how writing would spread ideas, ultimately expanding human knowledge. A similar situation arose after the development of the printing press. Critics argued that "cheaply printed books . . . would undermine religious authority, demean the work of scholars and scribes, and spread sedition and debauchery" (par. 31). Despite these concerns, I doubt you would find many people who would argue against the development of writing or the printing press. Writing and printed books have changed the world in ways that have been considered more beneficial than detrimental. Surely future generations will look back at the development of the Internet in the same way. ~~Can you imagine the world without books? It's a ridiculous thought today.~~

New sentences expand on Vela's response to Carr. The paragraph moves from points of agreement to a clearer statement of her thesis.

We know that the world of the future will look much different than it does today, and the development of the Internet will have much influence on how information is accessed, processed, and shared, likely shaping societies for generations. I understand Carr's concerns and even share some of them. ~~its development.~~ However, ~~we~~ I believe that the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages. We must not fear technological advancement and the spread of new knowledge while clinging to older technologies with the tips of our fingers. As humans, we have learned speech, developed writing, invented printing, and are now creating digital spaces and information. ~~We can~~

~~appreciate what we have while embracing what is to come.~~ I wonder what the next advancement in technology will be and how it will change our lives and our minds. ~~Our future depends on it.~~

rev
6.1

Work Cited

Carr, Nicholas. "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid? What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains." *The Atlantic,* July-Aug. 2008, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868.

New citation for the Carr article, in MLA documentation format (see Chapter 57).

Chapter 6
Editing, Formatting, and Proofreading

Learning Objectives

6.1 Edit for clarity and correctness.
6.2 Format and proofread your final draft.

6.1 Editing

6.1 Edit for clarity and correctness.

After you have revised your essay so that you are satisfied with the content, turn to the work of editing your sentences to correct them and clarify your ideas. In your editing, work first for clear and effective sentences that flow smoothly from one to the next. Then check your sentences for correctness. Use the questions in the "Checklist for editing" box below to guide your editing, making several passes through your draft.

6.1.1 Discovering what needs editing

Try these approaches to gain distance from your work:

- **Take a break.** Even fifteen minutes can clear your head.
- **Read the draft slowly, and read what you actually see.** Otherwise, you're likely to read what you intended to write but didn't. (If you have trouble slowing down, try reading your draft from back to front, sentence by sentence.)

- **Read as if you are encountering the draft for the first time.** Put yourself in the reader's place.
- **Have a classmate, friend, or relative read your work.** Make sure you understand and consider the reader's suggestions, even if you eventually decide not to take them.
- **Read the draft aloud or, even better, record it.** Listen for awkward rhythms, repetitive sentence patterns, and missing or clumsy transitions.
- **Learn from your own experience.** Keep a record of the problems that others have pointed out in your writing. When editing, check your work against this record.

Checklist for editing

Are my sentences clear?

Do my words and sentences mean what I Intend them to mean? Is anything confusing? Check especially for these:

Exact language
Parallelism
Clear modifiers
Clear reference of pronouns
Complete sentences
Sentences separated correctly

Are my sentences effective?

How well do words and sentences engage and hold readers' attention? Where does the writing seem wordy, choppy, or dull? Check especially for these:

Emphasis of main ideas
Smooth and informative transitions
Variety in sentence length and structure
Appropriate language
Concise sentences

Do my sentences contain errors?

Where do surface errors interfere with the clarity and effectiveness of my sentences? Check especially for these:

- **Spelling errors**
- **Sentence fragments**
- **Comma splices**
- **Verb errors**

  Verb forms, especially *-s* and *-ed* endings, correct forms of irregular verbs, and appropriate helping verbs
  Verb tenses, especially consistency
  Agreement between subjects and verbs, especially when words come between them or the subject is *each, everyone,* or a similar word

- **Pronoun errors**

  Pronoun forms, especially subjective (*he, she, they, who*) vs. objective (*him, her, them, whom*)

  Agreement between pronouns and antecedents, especially when the antecedent contains *or* or the antecedent is *each, everyone, person,* or a similar word

- **Punctuation errors**

  Commas, especially with comma splices and with *and* or *but,* with introductory elements, with nonessential elements, and with series

  Apostrophes in possessives but not plural nouns (*Dave's/witches*) and in contractions but not possessive personal pronouns (*it's/its*)

6.1.2 A sample edited paragraph

In the following example of editing, Erica Vela tightens wording, improves parallelism (with *online courses . . .*), and improves coherence by repeating key words and phrases.

~~Moreover, the~~ The Internet also provides other opportunities for learning. Colleges and universities in the United States are building virtual classrooms and online degree programs ~~online~~, allowing students from ~~across~~ around the globe to obtain postsecondary ~~post-secondary~~ educations in a world that increasingly demands them. In my degree program, all classes meet online. ~~It~~ Online courses allow~~s~~ me to work full-time while living nearly two hundred miles away from the main campus. Online courses also provide personal interaction with my professors and classmates through ~~online~~ discussion boards and video conferencing applications. Without the Internet, I would not have access to a postsecondary education and I would not be a student today.

6.1.3 Working with spelling and grammar/style checkers

A spelling checker and grammar/style checker can be helpful *if* you work within their limitations. The programs miss many problems and may flag items that are actually correct. Further, they know nothing of your purpose and your audience, so they cannot make important decisions about your writing. Always use these tools critically:

- **Read your work yourself to ensure that it's clear and error-free.**
- **Consider a checker's suggestions carefully against your intentions.** If you aren't sure whether to accept a checker's suggestion, consult a dictionary, writing handbook, or other source. Your version may be fine.

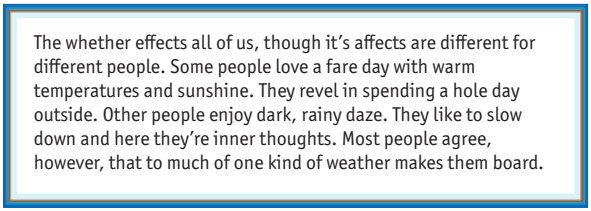
Using a spelling checker

Your word processor's spelling checker can be a great ally: it will flag words that are spelled incorrectly and will usually suggest

alternative spellings that resemble what you've typed. However, this ally can also undermine you because of its limitations:

- **The checker may flag a word that you've spelled correctly** just because the word does not appear in its dictionary.
- **The checker may suggest incorrect alternatives.** In providing a list of alternative spellings for your word, the checker may highlight the one it considers most likely to be correct. For example, if you misspell *definitely* by typing *definately*, your checker may highlight *defiantly* as the correct option. You need to verify that the alternative suggested by the checker is actually what you intend before selecting it. Consult an online or printed dictionary when you aren't sure about the checker's recommendations.
- **Most important, a spelling checker will not flag words that appear in its dictionary but that you have misused.** The paragraph in the screen shot below contains eleven errors that a spelling checker overlooked. Can you spot them?

Spelling checker


The whether effects all of us, though it's affects are different for different people. Some people love a fare day with warm temperatures and sunshine. They revel in spending a hole day outside. Other people enjoy dark, rainy daze. They like to slow down and here they're inner thoughts. Most people agree, however, that to much of one kind of weather makes them board.

A spelling checker failed to catch any of the eleven errors in this paragraph.

Using a grammar/style checker

Grammar/style checkers can flag incorrect grammar or punctuation and wordy or awkward sentences. However, these programs can call your attention only to passages that *may* be faulty. They miss many errors because they are not yet capable of analyzing language in all its complexity. (For instance, they can't accurately distinguish a word's part of speech when there are different possibilities, as *light* can be a noun, a verb, or an adjective.) And they often question passages that don't need editing, such as an appropriate passive verb or a deliberate and emphatic use of repetition.

You can customize a grammar/style checker to suit your needs and habits as a writer. Most checkers allow you to specify whether to check grammar only or grammar and style. Some style checkers can be set to the level of writing you intend, such as formal, standard, and informal. (For academic writing, choose formal.) You can also instruct the checker to flag specific grammar and style problems that tend to occur in your writing, such as mismatched subjects and verbs, overused passive voice, or a confusion between *its* and *it's*.

6.2 Final Draft

rev 6.2

6.2 Format and proofread your final draft.

After editing your essay, format and proofread it before you submit it to your instructor. Follow any required format for your paper, such as MLA (Chapter 57) and APA (Chapter 58).

Be sure to proofread the final essay several times to spot and correct errors. To increase the accuracy of your proofreading, you may need to experiment with ways to keep yourself from relaxing into the rhythm and the content of your prose. Here are a few tricks, including some used by professional proofreaders:

- **Read printed copy,** even if you will eventually submit the paper electronically. Most people proofread more accurately when reading type on paper than when reading it on a computer screen. (At the same time, don't view the printed copy as error-free just because it's clean. Clean-looking copy may still harbor errors.)
- **Read the paper aloud,** very slowly, and distinctly pronounce exactly what you see.
- **Place a ruler under each line as you read it.**
- **Read "against copy,"** comparing your final draft one sentence at a time against the edited draft.
- **Ignore content.** To keep the content of your writing from distracting you, read the essay backward sentence by sentence. Or use your word processor to isolate each paragraph from its context by printing it on a separate page. (Of course, reassemble the paragraphs before submitting the paper.)

6.2.1 Examining a sample final draft

Erica Vela's final essay begins below, presented in MLA format except for page breaks and page numbers. Comments in the margins point out key features of the essay's content.

Google Opens Our Minds—and Our Worlds

Descriptive title

In "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid?" Nicholas Carr laments that he was once "a scuba diver in the sea of words," but now he "zip[s] along the surface like a guy on a jet ski" (par. 4). He believes that the Internet is changing our minds at a fundamental level, damaging the way we process information and creating minds that struggle to remain focused on a given task for an extended time. Yet the Internet is changing more than how we process information. It is changing how we access and share information as well as how we interact with people across the globe. My experience of online education offers a benefit that Nicholas Carr overlooks: the Internet provides more opportunities for learning in areas where there are no well-stocked libraries or centers of higher education while offering more ways to access information from across the globe.

Summary of Carr, with quotations cited parenthetically in MLA style (Chapter 57)

Thesis statement: basic difference with and response to Carr

Carr describes his experience as "an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with [his] brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory" (par. 2). He laments his inability to focus on extended tasks. He worries that this focus on the Internet and technology is removing the human element from our thinking processes and, as sociologist Daniel Bell might suggest, replacing it with computerization (par. 14).

Continued summary of Carr

Transition to personal experience, beginning by noting points of agreement with Carr

Like Carr, I remember what life was like before the Internet. I live in a remote area, hundreds of miles from any college, university, or center of learning. I remember driving to the small local library and poring over their ancient card catalog, looking for books that held the information that I needed. If the library did not have the needed books, I would have to begin the extended process of interlibrary loan or travel hundreds of miles to the closest university library. But now I can search a library's database, *Amazon,* or *Google* and find dozens (or even hundreds) of books, journal articles, or Web sites. Some I can read immediately. Others I can order and have shipped to my house within two days. In this way and others, the Internet makes knowledge accessible across the globe. In most cases, you no longer need access to the physical source; you only need an access to the World Wide Web. Surely, Carr would agree that more equal and open access to information is a good thing.

Final sentence in this paragraph previews the argument against Carr to follow

Examples to support disagreement with Carr

The Internet also provides other opportunities for learning. Colleges and universities in the United States are building virtual classrooms and online degree programs, allowing students from around the globe to obtain postsecondary educations in a world that increasingly demands them. In my degree program, all classes meet online. Online courses allow me to work full-time while living nearly two hundred miles away from the main campus. Online courses also provide personal interaction with my professors and classmates through discussion boards and video conferencing applications. Without the Internet, I would not have access to a postsecondary education and I would not be a student today.

Second main point of disagreement with Carr

Elaboration and supporting examples to clarify second point of disagreement

Like Carr, I believe the Internet is changing how we think, but I believe that these changes will be a benefit in the future. As Carr notes, Socrates worried about the development of writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*. He believed that our ability to remember things would be permanently destroyed, but he couldn't foresee how writing would spread ideas, ultimately expanding human knowledge. A similar situation arose after the development of the printing press. Critics argued that "cheaply printed books . . . would undermine religious authority, demean the work of scholars and scribes, and spread sedition and debauchery" (par. 31). Despite these concerns, I doubt you would find many people who would argue against the development of writing or the printing press. Writing and printed books have changed the world in ways that have been considered more beneficial than detrimental.

Final point reinforces Vela's second disagreement with Carr and provides additional context

Surely future generations will look back at the development of the Internet in the same way.

¶ 7.1

We know that the world of the future will look much different than it does today, and the development of the Internet will have much influence on how information is accessed, processed, and shared, likely shaping societies for generations. I understand Carr's concerns and even share some of them. However, I believe that the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages. We must not fear technological advancement and the spread of new knowledge while clinging to older technologies with the tips of our fingers. As humans, we have learned human speech, developed writing, invented printing, and now we are creating digital spaces and information. I wonder what the next advancement in technology will be and how it will change our lives and our minds.

Conclusion returns to summarize Vela's main points of agreement and disagreement with Carr, but does not merely restate the thesis

[New page.]

Work Cited

Carr, Nicholas. "Is *Google* Making Us Stupid? What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains." *The Atlantic,* July-Aug. 2008, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/.

Work cited in MLA style (see Chapter 57)

Chapter 7
Paragraphs

Learning Objectives

7.1 Relate each paragraph to the essay as a whole.
7.2 Maintain the unity of each paragraph.
7.3 Make each paragraph coherent.
7.4 Develop the central idea of each paragraph.
7.5 Write effective introductory and concluding paragraphs.

7.1 Flow

7.1 Relate each paragraph to the essay as a whole.

Paragraphs develop the main ideas that support the thesis of a piece of writing, and they break these supporting ideas into manageable

chunks. For readers, paragraphs signal the movement between ideas and provide a breather from long stretches of text.

Culture and language

Not all cultures share the paragraphing conventions of American academic writing. In some other languages, writing moves differently from English on the page—not from left to right, but from right to left or down rows from top to bottom. Even in languages that move as English does on the page, writers may not use paragraphs at all, or they may use paragraphs but not state their central ideas. If your native language is not English and you have difficulty writing paragraphs, don't worry about paragraphing during drafting. Instead, during a separate step of revision, divide your text into parts that develop your main points, and mark those parts with indentions. Then you can make sure that each paragraph has a clear central idea supported by evidence such as facts and examples.

Checklist for revising paragraphs

- **Does each paragraph contribute to the essay as a whole?** Does each paragraph support the essay's central idea, or thesis? Does each paragraph relate to the ones that come before and after it?
- **Is each paragraph unified?** Does it adhere to one general idea that is either stated in a topic sentence or is otherwise apparent?
- **Is each paragraph coherent?** Do the sentences follow a clear sequence? Are the sentences linked as needed by parallelism, repetition or restatement, pronouns, consistency, and transitional expressions?
- **Is each paragraph developed?** Is the general idea of each paragraph well supported with specific evidence such as details, facts, examples, and reasons?

Paragraphs do not stand alone: they are key units of a larger piece of writing. Even if you draft a paragraph separately, it needs to connect to your central idea, or thesis—explaining it and deepening it. Together, paragraphs need to flow from one to the other so that readers easily grasp the points you are making and how each point contributes to the whole essay.

To see how effective body paragraphs work to help both writer and reader, look at the fourth paragraph of Erica Vela's essay "*Google* Opens Our Minds—and Our Worlds" from Chapter 6. Responding to an article by Nicholas Carr, Vela is supporting her thesis that Carr overlooks the benefits of Internet reading and online learning.