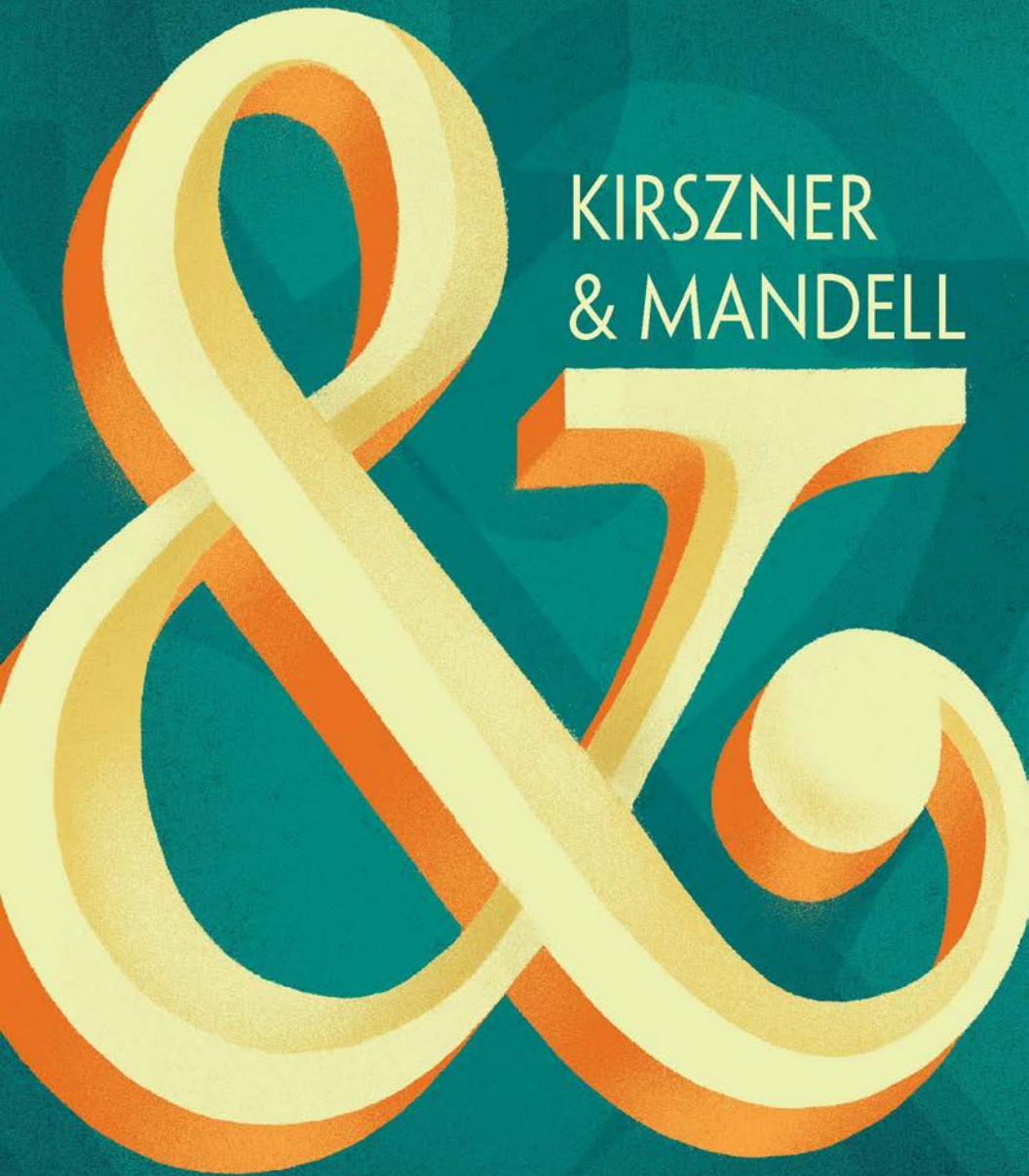
The Brief Cengage Handbook



KIRSZNER
& MANDELL

Eighth Edition

Brief Contents and Directory

How to Use *The Brief Cengage Handbook*

Welcome to the eighth edition of Kirszner & Mandell's ***The Brief Cengage Handbook***. This edition was designed to make it easy for you to find the answers to questions you have about writing.

Use the following guidelines to help you find information quickly:

- The brief contents/divider directory to the right lists all the parts and chapters contained in the book. Each part corresponds to one of the tabbed dividers.
- The front of each tabbed divider presents an overview of the chapters in that section, along with page references.
- The back of each tabbed divider lists Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), along with the page numbers where the answers can be quickly located.
- Inside the back cover is a detailed table of contents.
- The outside flap of the back cover provides you with a list of correction symbols and cross-references to the relevant sections of the handbook.

Ten Habits of Successful Students

Successful students have learned to be successful: they have developed specific strategies for success, and they apply those strategies to their education. You can learn the habits of successful students and apply them to your own college education—and, later on, to your career.

1 Learn to manage your time effectively.

College makes many demands on your time, and if you don't take control of your schedule, it will take control of you. If you are organized, you will be better prepared to handle the pressures of a college workload.

The calendar function in your cell phone is one valuable time-management tool.

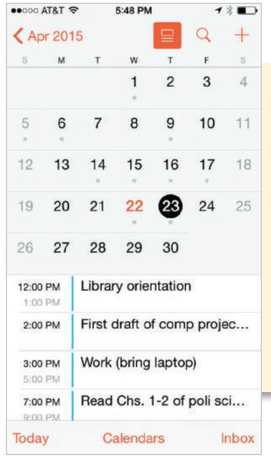


FIGURE 1 Sample cell phone calendar.

FOR SCHOOL, RECORD . . .

- assignment due dates.
- your study schedule.
- study group meetings.
- exams conference appointments.

FOR WORK AND HOME, RECORD . . .

- work hours.
- medical appointments.
- family obligations.
- plans with friends.

2 Put studying first.

- Studying is something you do regularly, not just right before an exam.
- Studying involves more than memorizing facts: it also means reading, rereading, and discussing ideas until you understand them.

Set up a study space.

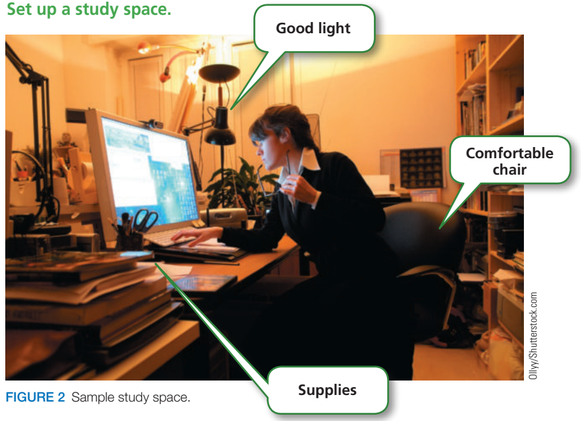


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FIGURE 2 Sample study space.

Form a study group.

By discussing concepts with other students in a **study group**, you can try out your ideas and get feedback, clarify complex concepts, and formulate questions for your instructor.

STUDY GROUP GROUND RULES

- Meet regularly.
- Decide in advance who will be responsible for which tasks.
- Set deadlines.
- Listen when someone else is speaking.
- Avoid rejecting others' ideas without considering them very carefully.
- Assign a note-taker.
- Take stock of the group's problems and progress at regular intervals.
- Be attentive to other students' learning styles and special needs.

3 Be sure you understand school and course requirements.

School Policies

Consult your school's student handbook, which is likely available online. Be sure to keep copies of any orientation materials you receive, and if you have questions, ask a peer counselor or your advisor.

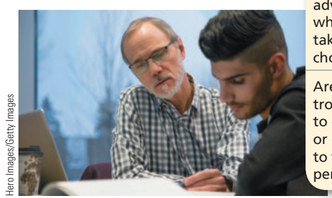
FIGURE 3 Sample course syllabus.

Course Policies

Requirements vary significantly from course to course. Consult the course's **syllabus** to tell you when assignments are due and exams are scheduled. Usually, it also explains your instructor's policies about attendance, lateness, deadlines, plagiarism, and classroom etiquette, as well as information on office hours and grading.

4 Take advantage of college services.

Colleges and universities offer students a wide variety of support services.



Hero Images/Getty Images

Are you struggling in a course?	Visit a campus tutoring service.
Do you need help writing a paper?	Make an appointment at the writing center.
Do you want advice about which courses to take, or about choosing a major?	Talk to your academic advisor.
Are you having trouble adjusting to college life, or do you want to talk about a personal problem?	Talk to a peer counselor or resident advisor, or make an appointment with a professional at the counseling center.

FIGURE 4 Student meeting with academic advisor.

5 Be an active learner in the classroom.

Participate.

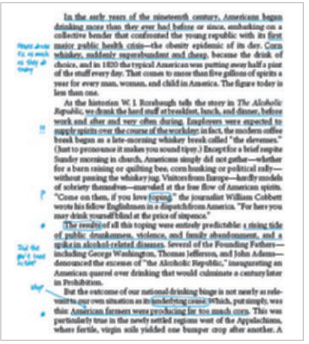
- ✔ Take as many small classes as you can.
- ✔ Take classes that require writing (See Parts 2–3 and 7).
- ✔ Do your homework and keep up with the reading.
- ✔ Attend classes regularly—and arrive on time.
- ✔ Listen attentively and take careful, complete notes.
- ✔ Engage in class discussions: ask and answer questions.

MonkeyBusiness Images/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 5 Students participating in class.

Use active reading strategies

(See Chapter 2).



In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans began drinking more than they ever had before or since, embarking on a collective bender that confronted the young republic with its first major public health crisis—the obesity epidemic of its day. Corn whiskey, suddenly superabundant and cheap, became the drink of choice, and in 1830 the typical American was putting away half a pint of the stuff every day. That comes to more than five gallons of spirits a year for every man, woman, and child in America. The figure today is less than one.

As the historian W. J. Rorabaugh tells the story in *The Alcoholic Republic*, we drank the hard stuff at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, before work and after and very often during. Employers were expected to supply spirits over the course of the workday; in fact, the modern coffee break began as a late-morning whiskey break called "the elevenses." (Just to pronounce it makes you sound tiper.) Except for a brief respite Sunday morning in church, Americans simply did not gather—whether for a barn raising or quilting bee, corn husking or political rally—without passing the whiskey jug. Visitors from Europe—hardly models of sobriety themselves—marveled at the free flow of American spirits. "Come on then, if you love toping," the journalist William Cobbett wrote his fellow Englishmen in a dispatch from America. "For here you may drink yourself blind at the price of sixpence."

The results of all this toping were entirely predictable: a rising tide of public drunkenness, violence, and family abandonment, and a spike in alcohol-related diseases. Several of the Founding Fathers—including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams—denounced the excesses of "the Alcoholic Republic," inaugurating an American quarrel over drinking that would culminate a century later in Prohibition.

But the outcome of our national drinking binge is not nearly as relevant to our own situation as its underlying cause. Which, put simply, was that American farmers were producing far too much corn. This was particularly true in the newly settled regions west of the Appalachians, where fertile, virgin soils yielded one bumper crop after another. A

FIGURE 6 Sample highlighting and annotations of a book passage.

6 Be an active learner outside the classroom.

As successful students know, education is more than just attending classes. You can take an active role in your education beyond the classroom.

At School . . .

- ✔ Take advantage of your instructors' office hours. Make appointments, and ask questions.
- ✔ Get to know your academic advisor, and share your interests and goals with him or her.
- ✔ Keep up to date on your school's news and activities. Read your school newspaper. Open and read any relevant emails and newsletters. Check your college's website regularly.
- ✔ Participate in campus activities. This can enhance your education while offering opportunities to make valuable connections and friendships.

Beyond School . . .

- ✔ Try to arrange an **internship**, a job that enables you to gain practical experience. Many businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies offer internships—paid or unpaid—to qualified students (See Chapter 32). Visit your school's career services department to start exploring options.
- ✔ Take **service-learning courses**, if they are offered at your school, or volunteer at a local school or social agency (See Chapter 31).

Lisa F. Young/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 7 Student intern.

7 Use the library.

Even—and especially!—in the digital age, learning to use the library is an important part of your education (See Chapters 12–13).

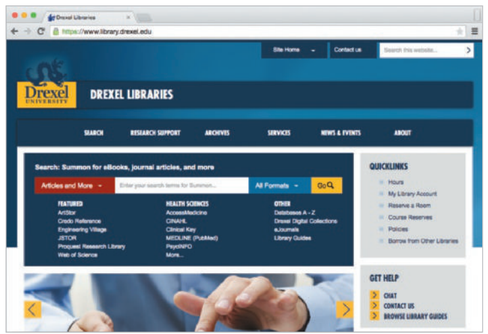
A library provides . . .

- a quiet place to study, away from family or roommates.
- access to materials that cannot be found online: rare books, special collections, and audiovisual materials.
- expert advice from reference librarians, who can answer questions, guide your research, and point out sources you might never have found on your own (See Part 4).

Lehtimaster/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 8 Students in the library.

Libraries also provide **free access through subscription databases to thousands of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and archives**. At most schools, you can access this resource at the library itself or anywhere online with your school email or ID and a password.



Drexel University

FIGURE 9 Home page of an academic library's website.

8 Use technology.

Being tech-savvy is essential to success in college. You probably already have most of the skills you need but if you don't, it's important to make an effort to become fluent in the following:

- ✔ Composing in word-processing programs such as *Microsoft Word* or *Google Drive*
- ✔ Sending emails and attaching files to them
- ✔ Using the Internet and evaluating websites (See Chapter 3, Chapter 13, and Chapter 21)
- ✔ Using your library's electronic resources (See Chapter 12)
- ✔ Scanning and inserting documents that contain images as well as text
- ✔ Using technology to enhance a project—for example, learning how to use *PowerPoint* or *Keynote* for a presentation (See Chapter 33) or *Google Sheets* to make a table (See Chapter 23)
- ✔ Syncing information among various devices (phone, computer, tablet, etc.)
- ✔ Knowing when to use technology—and when not to (See Chapters 22–23)

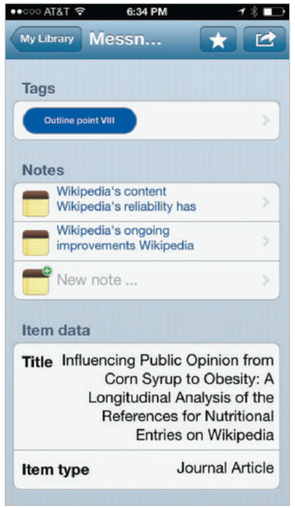


FIGURE 10 Sample notes on a journal article in the *ZotPad* app.

Notetaking apps like *ZotPad* can be useful both in and out of the classroom.

Be aware of the online services your school offers.

Many campuses rely on customizable information-management systems called **portals**. You can use your user ID (or school email) and password to access services such as locating and contacting your advisor and viewing your class schedule and grades. Portals may also be connected to individual course websites.

9 Make contacts.

Classmates

Be sure you have the phone numbers and email addresses of at least two students in each of your classes. These will come in handy if you miss class, need help understanding notes, or want to form a study group.

Jack Hollingsworth/Digital Vision/Getty Images

FIGURE 11 Student talking with instructor.

Friends from Activities or Work-Study Jobs

Build relationships with students who participate in college activities with you. They are likely to share your goals and interests, and you may want to discuss decisions like choosing a major, considering further education, and making career choices.

Instructors

Develop a relationship with your instructors, particularly those in the areas of study that interest you most.

One of the things cited most often in studies of successful students is the importance of **mentors**, experienced academic and professional individuals whose advice you trust. Long after you leave college, you will find these contacts useful.

10 Be a lifelong learner.

- ✔ Get in the habit of reading local and national newspapers.
- ✔ Make connections outside the college community to keep in touch with the larger world.
- ✔ Attend plays and concerts sponsored by your school or community.
- ✔ Go to lectures offered at your local library or bookstore.

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FIGURE 12 Students at a performance.

Never miss an opportunity to learn.

Think about the life you will lead after college. Think about who you want to be and what you have to do to get there. This is what successful students do.

The Brief Cengage Handbook

KIRSZNER & MANDELL

Eighth Edition

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How to Use This Book

We would like to introduce you to the eighth edition of *The Brief Cengage Handbook*, a compact, easy-to-use reference guide for college students that comes out of our years of experience as full-time teachers of writing. This handbook offers concise yet complete coverage of the writing process, critical thinking, argumentation, common sentence errors, grammar and style, word choice, punctuation and mechanics, English for speakers of other languages, and college survival skills. In addition, it includes the most up-to-date information on composing in digital environments; MLA, APA, Chicago, and CSE documentation styles; writing in the disciplines; and document design.

Throughout, we balance what is new with practical advice from our years in the classroom. For this reason, despite its compact size, *The Brief Cengage Handbook* is more than just a quick reference; it is a comprehensive guide for writing in college and beyond. Most of all, it is a book that writers can depend on not only for sound, sensible advice about grammar and usage but also for up-to-date information about composing in various digital environments.

What's New in the Eighth Edition?

In this new edition, we kept what students and instructors told us worked well, and we fine-tuned what we thought could work better. In addition, we expanded our coverage to include the material students need to function in today's classrooms—and in today's world.

- **Updated and expanded coverage of the rhetorical situation** in Chapter 1, "Understanding the Rhetorical Situation," helps students make informed choices about content, emphasis, organization, format, style, and tone.
- **Three new chapters** (Chapter 9, "Writing Proposals"; Chapter 21, "Understanding, Exploring, and Developing Multimodal Texts"; and Chapter 25, "Composing a Rhetorical Analysis") guide students through the process of developing and delivering various texts in a range of genres.
- **Two thoroughly revised research chapters** (Chapter 12, "Finding Information," and Chapter 13, "Evaluating Sources") reflect the way students conduct research and address the issues they're likely to encounter.
- **Updated and expanded coverage of MLA, APA, Chicago, and CSE documentation styles** in Chapters 17–20 includes numerous model

citations that help students correctly apply the latest documentation guidelines when writing in various disciplines.
- **New planning guides** throughout the text help students plan and organize a range of documents in various formats.
- **New exercises** throughout the text allow students to practice at each stage of the writing, revising, and editing processes.
- **A new "Ten Habits of Successful Students" foldout** illustrates and helps students apply the strategies of successful students both in and out of college.

Features of *The Brief Cengage Handbook*

Throughout the eighth edition of *The Brief Cengage Handbook*, we have focused on making the text clear, inviting, and easy to navigate. The book's many innovative pedagogical features, listed below, have helped us achieve these goals.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** appear at the beginning of each part, on the back of the tabbed dividers. Corresponding marginal FAQ icons appear in the chapters beside each answer.
- **Collaborative writing icons** appear alongside sections and exercises that emphasize peer review and other collaborative work.
- **Numerous checklists** summarize key information.
- **Close-up boxes** provide an in-depth look at some of the more challenging writing-related issues students will encounter.
- **Part 5** includes the most up-to-date documentation and format guidelines from the Modern Language Association, the American Psychological Association, the University of Chicago Press, and the Council of Science Editors. Specially designed documentation directories make it easy to locate models for various kinds of sources, including those found in online databases such as *Academic Search Premier* and *LexisNexis*. In addition, annotated diagrams of sample works-cited entries clearly illustrate the elements of proper citations.
- **Marginal cross-references** throughout the book enable students to flip directly to other sections that treat topics in more detail.
- **Marginal multilingual cross-references** (designated by **ml**) throughout the book direct students to appropriate sections of Part 13, "Composing for Multilingual Writers," where concepts are presented as they apply specifically to multilingual writers.
- **Multilingual tips** woven throughout the text explain concepts in relation to the unique experiences of multilingual students.

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The staff of Cenveo did its usual stellar job, led by our talented Project Manager and Copyeditor Karen Stocz. James Weinberg's cover design is the icing on the cake.

We would also like to thank our families for being there when we needed them. And, finally, we each thank the person on the other side of the ampersand for making our collaboration work one more time.

Laurie Kirszner
Steve Mandell
January 2016

Teaching and Learning Resources

Online Instructor's Manual and Answer Key

The Online Instructor's Manual and Answer Key contains an abundance of instructor materials, including sample syllabi, activities, and answers to the book's exercises. To download or print the manual, log on to login.cengage.com with your faculty account.

MindTap

MindTap® English for Kirszner and Mandell's *The Brief Cengage Handbook*, eighth edition, engages your students to become better thinkers, communicators, and writers by blending your course materials with content that supports every aspect of the writing process.

- Interactive activities on grammar and mechanics promote application in student writing
- Easy-to-use paper management system helps prevent plagiarism and allows for electronic submission, grading, and peer review
- A vast database of scholarly sources with video tutorials and examples supports every step of the research process
- Professional tutoring guides students from rough drafts to polished writing
- Visual analytics track student progress and engagement
- Seamless integration into your campus learning management system keeps all your course materials in one place

MindTap lets you compose your course, your way.

PART 1

Approaching Texts

PART 1

Approaching Texts

Frequently Asked Questions

CHAPTER 1

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

Everyone who sets out to write confronts a series of choices. In the academic, public, and private writing that you do in school, on the job, and in your personal life, your understanding of the rhetorical situation is essential—influencing the choices you make about content, emphasis, organization, format, style, and tone.

Note: Like written texts, **visual texts**—fine art, charts and graphs, photographs, infographics, maps, advertisements, and so on—are also created in response to specific rhetorical situations. See 9c

Before you begin to write, you should try to answer the following questions:

- What is my **rhetorical situation**, or context for writing?
- What is my **purpose** for writing?
- Who is my **audience**?
- What **genre** should I use in this situation?

1a Considering the Rhetorical Situation

Begin by considering the **rhetorical situation**, the set of conventions that are associated with a particular writing assignment. By keeping this rhetorical situation in mind throughout the writing process, you make sure that your writing keeps its focus. See 9c

In college, the rhetorical situation is often identified by your assignment. For example, if your assignment asks you to write about an event, such as a family tradition, you will need to identify a specific occurrence, such as a family beach trip, to focus on. In personal, civic, and professional writing, the rhetorical situation is often determined by a particular event, interest, or concern that creates the need for this writing. For example, you may write a proposal to your boss to request funding for a project or to suggest a better way of performing a particular task.

EXERCISE 1.1

A. Focus on a book that you liked or disliked very much. How would you write about the book in each of the following rhetorical situations? Consider how each situation would affect your choice of content, style, organization, format, tone, and emphasis.

- A post on your composition class's course site reflecting on your impressions of the book
- An exam question that asks you to summarize the book's ideas
- A book review for a composition class in which you evaluate the book's strengths and weaknesses
- An email in which you try to convince your local school board that the book should (or should not) be purchased for a public high school's library
- An editorial for your school newspaper in which you try to persuade other students that the book is (or is not) worth reading
- A text to a friend recommending (or criticizing) the book

B. Write responses for two of the rhetorical situations listed in Part A of this exercise.

1b Determining Your Purpose

In simple terms, your **purpose** for writing is what you want to accomplish. For instance, your purpose may be to **reflect**, to express feelings or look back on your thinking. Sometimes your purpose may be to **inform**, to convey factual information as accurately and as logically as possible. At other times, your purpose may be to **persuade**, to convince your readers. Finally, your purpose may be to **evaluate**, to make a judgment about something, as in a book or film review, a recommendation report, or a comparative analysis.

1 Writing to Reflect

In journals, writers are often introspective, exploring ideas and feelings to make sense of their experiences; in autobiographical memoirs and personal blog posts, writers communicate their emotions and reactions to others. Another type of reflective writing is **metacognitive writing**, in which writers explain what they have learned and consider the decisions made throughout the writing process.

> At the age of five, six, well past the time when most other children no longer easily notice the difference between sounds uttered at home and words spoken in public, I had a different experience. I lived in a world magically compounded of sounds. I remained a child longer than most; I lingered too long, poised at the edge of language—often frightened by the sounds of *los gringos*, delighted by the sounds of Spanish at home. I shared with my family a

language that was startlingly different from that used in the great city around us. (Richard Rodriguez, *Aria: Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood*)

2 Writing to Inform

In news articles, writers report information, communicating factual details to readers; in reference books, instruction manuals, textbooks, and websites sponsored by nonprofit and government agencies, writers provide definitions and explain concepts or processes, trying to help readers see relationships and understand ideas.

> Most tarantulas live in the tropics, but several species occur in the temperate zone and a few are common in the southern U.S. Some varieties are large and have powerful fangs with which they can inflict a deep wound. These formidable-looking spiders do not, however, attack man; you can hold one in your hand, if you are gentle, without being bitten. Their bite is dangerous only to insects and small mammals such as mice; for man it is no worse than a hornet's sting. (Alexander Petrunkevitch, "The Spider and the Wasp")

Note: In your personal writing, you may convey information informally in *Facebook* updates, tweets, instant messages, and text messages.

3 Writing to Persuade

In proposals and editorials, as well as in political blogs and in advertising, writers try to convince readers to accept their positions on various issues.

> America must make sure the melting pot continues to melt: immigrants must become Americans. Seymour Martin Lipset, professor of political science and sociology at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, observes: "The history of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension and tragedy. Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, Lebanon—all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus have divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons and Corsicans." (Richard D. Lamm, "English Comes First")

4 Writing to Evaluate

In reviews of books, films, or performances and in reports, critiques, and program evaluations, writers assess the validity, accuracy, and quality of information, ideas, techniques, products, procedures, or services, perhaps assessing the relative merits of two or more things.

Review of *A Dance with Dragons* by George R. R. Martin. Random House, 2011. May 16, 2015.

> I am a fan of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, so I was looking forward to the release of *A Dance with Dragons*, the fifth book in the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Although I found the fourth book in the series slightly disappointing,

A Dance with Dragons is a great read. Westeros, the world created by George R. R. Martin, has a complex history that stretches back thousands of years. The characters who inhabit Westeros are interesting and believable. Their various motives, flaws, and morals drive their actions in compelling ways with surprising and far-reaching consequences. It was easy to get lost in this far-away world and wrapped up in its people and history. I'm looking forward to seeing how this latest volume comes to life on the screen in *Game of Thrones*.

Although writers write to reflect, to inform, to persuade, and to evaluate, these purposes are not mutually exclusive, and writers may have other purposes as well. The checklist below lists some specific purposes for writing.

CHECKLIST

Determining Your Purpose

Before you begin to write, you need to determine why you are writing. Your purposes can include any of the following:

- ❑ to reflect
- ❑ to inform
- ❑ to persuade
- ❑ to evaluate
- ❑ to explain
- ❑ to amuse or entertain
- ❑ to discover
- ❑ to analyze
- ❑ to debunk
- ❑ to draw comparisons
- ❑ to make an analogy
- ❑ to define
- ❑ to criticize
- ❑ to motivate
- ❑ to satirize
- ❑ to speculate
- ❑ to warn
- ❑ to reassure
- ❑ to take a stand
- ❑ to identify problems
- ❑ to suggest solutions
- ❑ to identify causes
- ❑ to predict effects
- ❑ to interpret
- ❑ to instruct
- ❑ to inspire

As you begin to write, determining your purpose for writing is critical. As you consider the requirements of your assignment, your rhetorical situation and purpose work together. Later, identifying and considering the needs of your audience will help you shape the content, organization, tone, and style of your writing.

EXERCISE 1.2

The two student paragraphs that follow treat the same general subject, but their purposes are different. What do you see as the primary purpose of each paragraph? What other purposes might each writer have had in mind?

1. Answer to an essay exam question: "Identify the Boston Massacre."

> The Boston Massacre refers to a 1770 confrontation between British soldiers and a crowd of colonists. Encouraged by Samuel Adams, the citizens had become more and more upset over issues

such as the British government's stationing troops and customs commissioners in Boston. When angry colonists attacked a customhouse sentry on March 5, 1770, a fight broke out. Soldiers fired into the crowd, and five civilians were killed. Although the soldiers were found guilty only of manslaughter and given only a token punishment, Samuel Adams's propaganda created the idea of a "massacre" in the minds of many Americans.

2. Excerpt from "The Ohio Massacre: 1770 Revisited" (student essay):

In two incidents that occurred exactly two hundred years apart, civilian demonstrators were shot and killed by armed troops. Although civilians were certainly inciting the British troops, starting scuffles and even brawls, these actions should not have led the Redcoats to fire blindly into the crowd. Similarly, the Ohio National Guard should not have allowed themselves to be provoked by students who were calling names, shoving, or throwing objects, and Governor Rhodes should not have authorized the troops to fire their weapons. The deaths—five civilians in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1770, and four students in Kent, Ohio, in 1970—were all unnecessary.

1c Identifying Your Audience

When you are in the early stages of a writing project and staring at a blank screen, it is easy to forget that you are writing for an audience. However, most of the writing you compose is directed at a specific **audience**, a particular reader or group of readers. Sometimes your audience is indicated by your assignment; at other times, you must decide for yourself who your readers are.

1 Writing for an Audience

At different times, in different roles, you address a variety of audiences. Before you write, you should think about the characteristics of the audience (or audiences) that you will be addressing.

- **In your personal life**, you may send notes, emails, or text messages to friends and family members. You may find yourself writing on social media and for special occasions in a variety of formats or **genres**.
- **In your public life**, as a citizen, a consumer, or a member of a community, you may respond to social, economic, or political issues by writing letters or emails to newspapers, public officials, or representatives of special interest groups. You might also be called on to write media releases, brochures, flyers, or newsletters for civic, political, or religious organizations.

See 1d
See Ch. 31

- **As an employee**, you may write emails, memos, proposals, and reports to your superiors, to staff members you supervise, or to coworkers; you may also be asked to address customers or critics, board members or stockholders, funding agencies or the general public.
- **As a student**, you will likely write reflective statements and responses as well as essays, reports, and exams in various academic **disciplines**. You may also participate in peer review sessions, writing evaluations of classmates' drafts as well as responses to classmates' comments about your own work-in-progress.

See Pt. 7

As you write, you shape your writing according to what you think your audience needs and expects. Your assessment of your readers' interests, educational level, biases, and expectations determines not only the information you include, but also what you emphasize and how you arrange your material.

2 The College Writer's Audience

As a student, you may be asked to write for a specific audience, or you may be asked to select an audience. Often, college writers assume they are writing for an audience of one: the instructor who assigns the essay; however, this is not always the case because many instructors want students to address real-life rhetorical situations.

When writing for your instructors, you need to demonstrate your knowledge of the subject; instructors want to see whether you can express your ideas clearly and accurately. They assign written work to encourage you to **think critically**, so the way you organize and express your ideas can be as important as the ideas themselves.

See Ch. 7

Instructors expect accurate information, standard grammar and correct spelling, logically presented ideas, and a reasonable degree of stylistic sophistication. They also expect you to define your terms and to support your generalizations with specific examples. Finally, instructors expect you to draw your own conclusions and to provide full and accurate **documentation** for ideas that are not your own.

See Pt. 5

If you are writing in an instructor's academic field, you can omit long overviews and basic definitions. Remember, however, that outside their areas of expertise, most instructors are simply general readers. If you think you may know more about a subject than your instructor does, be sure to provide background and to supply the definitions, examples, and analogies that will make your ideas clear.

Even though all academic fields of study—or **disciplines**—share certain values, instructors in different disciplines emphasize different aspects of writing. For example, they expect your writing to conform to discipline-specific formats, conventions, and citation systems. Often, their requirements will be different from those you will learn in your composition classes. (**Part 7** of this text highlights the key features of writing in other disciplines and includes

examples of assignments from disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural and applied sciences.)

3 Writing for Other Students

Before you submit an essay to an instructor, you may have an opportunity to participate in **peer review**, sharing your work with your fellow students and responding in writing to their work. When you participate in peer review, it is helpful to think of your classmates as an audience whose needs you should take into account.

MULTILINGUAL TIP

Instructors are available outside of class during office hours, which are typically listed on your course syllabi. Keep in mind that instructors are available throughout the semester to help you succeed in your courses. It is a good idea to contact your instructors during the first week of school to introduce yourself and to explain what you hope to learn in your courses. You can email them to set up appointments or stop by during office hours.

- **Writing Drafts** If you know that other students will read a draft of your essay, consider how they might react to your ideas. For example, are they likely to disagree with you? To be confused, or even mystified, by any of your references? To be shocked or offended by your essay's language or content? You should not assume that your fellow students will automatically share your values, political opinions, or cultural frame of reference. For this reason, it is important to maintain a neutral tone and use moderate language in your essay and to explain any historical, geographical, or cultural references that you think might be unfamiliar to your audience.

See 6c2

- **Making Comments** When you respond to another student's writing, you should take into account how he or she will react to your comments. Your tone is important. You want to be as encouraging (and as polite) as possible. In addition, keep in mind that your purpose is to offer insightful comments that can help your classmate write a stronger essay. (Your instructor may have specific response prompts that you should use to provide feedback.) Remember, when you respond to another student's essay, your goal is to be constructive, not critical or negative.

CHECKLIST

Writing for an Academic Audience

Before you respond to an assignment in your college courses, you need to identify the audience you are writing for. The following questions can help you understand what your audience expects:

- ❑ What discipline are you writing for?
- ❑ What kinds of assignments are typical of this discipline?
- ❑ What expectations do instructors in this discipline have?
- ❑ What style considerations are important in this discipline?
- ❑ What writing conventions are used in this discipline?
- ❑ What formats are used in this discipline?
- ❑ What research sources are used in this discipline?
- ❑ What documentation style is used in this discipline?

1d Selecting a Genre

In your college courses, you will compose many different kinds of texts—for example, academic essays, book reviews, research reports, proposals, lab reports, and case studies. These different types of texts—with their distinctive characteristics and conventions—are referred to as **genres**. In simple terms, a genre is a way of classifying a text according to its style, structure, and format.

A writer's choice of the genre, structure, and medium for writing is based on the message he or she wants to send and the audience he or she intends to reach. For example, if a writer seeks to inform an audience about an upcoming sales event, an *Instagram* post might be appropriate for college students, but a newspaper advertisement might be better for a more mature audience.

Most college writing assignments specify a particular genre. For example, your composition instructor might ask you to write an essay about a personal experience, to evaluate a novel or a film, or to take a position on an issue that you feel strongly about. In these cases, your familiarity with the conventions of the narrative essay, the book or film review, and argumentative writing, respectively, would help you decide how to approach and develop the assignment. Your knowledge of the requirements and features of a specific genre would also be essential if you were going to complete a literature review for your psychology class, a lab report for your chemistry class, or a business proposal for your management class. (For detailed discussions of the genres most frequently used in various disciplines, **see Pts. 7 and 8**.)

CHAPTER 2

Reading and Interpreting Texts

Reading is an essential part of learning. Before you can become an effective writer and a successful student, you need to know how to get the most out of the texts you read.

Central to developing effective reading skills is learning the techniques of **active reading**. Being an active reader means being actively involved with the text: marking the text in order to identify parallels, question ambiguities, distinguish important points from not-so-important ones, and connect causes with effects and generalizations with specific examples.

The understanding you gain from active reading prepares you to think (and write) critically about a text.

2a Previewing a Text

Before you begin reading a text, you should preview it—that is, skim it to get a sense of the writer's subject and emphasis.

When you preview a **periodical article**, skim the introductory and concluding paragraphs for summaries of the writer's main points. (Journal articles in the sciences and social sciences often begin with summaries called **abstracts**.) Thesis statements, topic sentences, repeated key terms, transitional words and phrases, and transitional paragraphs can also help you to identify the key points a writer is making. In addition, look for the **visual cues**—such as headings and lists—that writers use to emphasize ideas.

See 23b–c

When you preview a **book**, start by looking at its table of contents; then, turn to its index. A quick glance at the index will reveal the amount of coverage the book gives to subjects that may be important to you. As you leaf through the chapters, look at pictures, graphs, or tables and the captions that appear with them.

MULTILINGUAL TIP

When you read a text for the first time, don't worry about understanding every word. Instead, just try to get a general idea of what the text is about and how it is organized. Later on, you can use a dictionary to look up any unfamiliar words.

Close-Up VISUAL CUES

When you preview a text, don't forget to note the use of color and of various typographical elements—typeface and type size, boldface and italics—to emphasize ideas.

CHECKLIST

Previewing a Text

When you preview a text, try to answer these questions:

- ❑ What is the text's general subject?
- ❑ What are the writer's main points?
- ❑ How much space does the writer devote to topics relevant to your interests or research?

continued

Previewing a Text *(continued)*

- ❑ What other topics are covered?
- ❑ Who is the author of the text? What do you know about this writer?
- ❑ Is the text current? Is its information up to date?
- ❑ Does the text strike you as interesting, accessible, and useful?

2b Highlighting a Text

When you have finished previewing a work, photocopy relevant sections of books and articles, and print out useful material from online sources. Then, **highlight** the pages using a system of graphic symbols and underlining to identify the writer's key points and their relationships to one another.

CHECKLIST

Using Highlighting Symbols

When you read a text, use strategies such as the following to help you understand the material:

- ❑ Underline to indicate information you should read again.
- ❑ Box or circle key words or important phrases.
- ❑ Put question marks next to confusing passages, unclear points, or words you need to look up.
- ❑ Draw lines or arrows to show connections between ideas.
- ❑ Number points that are discussed in sequence.
- ❑ Draw a vertical line in the margin to set off an important section.
- ❑ Star especially important ideas.

2c Annotating a Text

After you have read through your material once, read it again—this time, more critically. At this stage, you should **annotate** the content, recording your responses to what you read. This process of recording notes in the margins or between the lines will help you to better understand the writer's ideas and your own reactions to those ideas.

MULTILINGUAL TIP

You may find it useful to use your native language when you annotate a text.

Some of your annotations may be relatively straightforward. For example, you

may define new words, identify unfamiliar references, or jot down brief summaries. Other annotations may reflect your personal reactions to the text. For example, you may identify a parallel between your own experience and one described in the text, or you may note your opinion of the writer's position.

As you start to **think critically** about a text, your annotations may identify points that confirm (or dispute) your own ideas, question the appropriateness or accuracy of the writer's support, uncover the writer's biases, or even question (or challenge) the writer's conclusion.

See Ch. 7

The following passage illustrates a student's highlighting and annotations of a passage from Michael Pollan's book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Americans began drinking more than they ever had before or since, embarking on a collective bender that confronted the young republic with its first major public health crisis—the obesity epidemic of its day. Corn whiskey, suddenly superabundant and cheap, became the drink of choice, and in 1820 the typical American was putting away half a pint of the stuff every day. That comes to more than five gallons of spirits a year for every man, woman, and child in America. The figure today is less than one.

People drank 5x as much as they do today

As the historian W. J. Rorabaugh tells the story in *The Alcoholic Republic*, we drank the hard stuff at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, before work and after and very often during. Employers were expected to supply spirits over the course of the workday; in fact, the modern coffee break began as a late-morning whiskey break called "the elevenses." (Just to pronounce it makes you sound tipsy.) Except for a brief respite Sunday morning in church, Americans simply did not gather—whether for a barn raising or quilting bee, corn husking or political rally—without passing the whiskey jug. Visitors from Europe—hardly models of sobriety themselves—marveled at the free flow of American spirits. "Come on then, if you love toping," the journalist William Cobbett wrote his fellow Englishmen in a dispatch from America. "For here you may drink yourself blind at the price of sixpence."

!!

?

The results of all this toping were entirely predictable: a rising tide of public drunkenness, violence, and family abandonment, and a spike in alcohol-related diseases. Several of the Founding Fathers—including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams—denounced the excesses of "the Alcoholic Republic," inaugurating an American quarrel over drinking that would culminate a century later in Prohibition.

Did the gov't take action?

But the outcome of our national drinking binge is not nearly as relevant to our own situation as its underlying cause. Which, put simply, was this: American farmers were producing far too much corn. This was

Why?

particularly true in the newly settled regions west of the Appalachians, where fertile, virgin soils yielded one bumper crop after another. A mountain of surplus corn piled up in the Ohio River Valley. Much as today, the astounding productivity of American farmers proved to be their own worst enemy, as well as a threat to public health. For when yields rise, the market is flooded with grain, and its price collapses. What happens next? The excess biomass works like a vacuum in reverse: Sooner or later, clever marketers will figure out a way to induce the human omnivore to consume the surfeit of cheap calories.

Examples from contemporary US farming?

?

This is his point

2d Reading Electronic Texts

Even when electronic documents physically resemble print documents (as they do in online newspaper articles), the way they present information can be very different. Print documents are **linear**; that is, readers move in a straight line from the beginning of a document to the end. Print documents are also self-contained, including all the background information, explanations, supporting details, and visuals necessary to make their point.

Electronic documents, however, are usually not linear. They often include advertising, marginal commentary, and graphics, and they may also include sound and video. In addition, links embedded in the text encourage readers to go to other sites for facts, statistical data, visuals, or additional articles that supplement the discussion. For example, readers of the electronic discussion of gun control pictured in Figure 2.1 could link to FBI data about the connection between "concealed carry laws" and violent crime. Once they access this material, they can choose to read it carefully, skim it, or ignore it.

The format of electronic texts presents challenges to readers. First, because links to other material interrupt the document's flow, it may be hard for readers to focus on a writer's main idea and key points or to follow an argument's logic. In addition, pages may be very busy, crowded with distracting marginalia, visuals, and advertisements. For these reasons, it makes sense to use a slightly different process when you apply active reading strategies to an electronic text.

Previewing During the previewing stage, you will probably want to skim the text online, doing your best to ignore visuals, marginal commentary, advertising, and links. If the text looks like something you will want to read more closely, you should print it out (taking care to print the "printer-friendly" version, which will usually omit the distracting material and enable you to focus on the text's content).

FIGURE 2.1 Excerpt from "Do More Guns Mean Less Crime?" A *Reason Online* Debate. Reprinted by permission of Reason.

Highlighting and Annotating Once you have hard copy of an electronic text, you can proceed to highlight and annotate it just as you would a print text. Reading on hard copy will enable you to follow the writer's main idea instead of clicking on every link. However, you should be sure to circle any links that look promising so you can explore them later on.

Note: You can also highlight and annotate web-based texts by using a program such as *Diigo*, which makes it possible for you to highlight and write self-stick notes on electronic documents.

EXERCISE 2.1

Find an article that interests you in a print or online newspaper or magazine. Read it carefully, highlighting it as you read. When you have finished, annotate the article. Then, answer the following questions:

- What is the writer's general subject?
- What are the writer's main points?
- What examples and details does the writer use to support these main points?
- What questions do you have about the writer's ideas?

2e Writing a Critical Response

CHECKLIST

Elements of a Critical Response

When you write a critical response, you may include some or all of the following elements.

- ❑ Summary: What is the writer saying?
- ❑ Analysis: What elements is the text made up of?
- ❑ Interpretation: What does the text mean?
- ❑ Synthesis: How is the text like and unlike other texts? How are its ideas like and unlike ideas in other texts?
- ❑ Evaluation: Is the text accurate and reliable? Do its ideas seem reasonable?

Once you have previewed, highlighted, and annotated a text, you should have the understanding (and the material) you need to write a **critical response** that *summarizes*, *analyzes*, and *interprets* the text's key ideas and perhaps *evaluates* them as well. It can also *synthesize* the ideas in the text with ideas in other texts.

The following is a student's critical response to the passage from *The Omnivore's Dilemma* on pages 13–14.

Author and title identified

In an excerpt from his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan discusses the drinking habits of nineteenth-century Americans and makes a connection between the cause of this "national drinking binge" and

Summary

the factors behind our twenty-first-century unhealthy diets. In both cases, he blames the overproduction of grain by American farmers. He links nineteenth-century overproduction of corn with "a rising tide of public drunkenness, violence, and family abandonment, and a spike in

Analysis and interpretation

alcohol-related deaths," and he also links the current overproduction of grain with a "threat to public health." Although there are certainly other causes of our current problems with obesity, particularly among young

Evaluation

children, Pollan's analogy makes sense. As long as farmers need to sell their overabundant crops, consumers will be presented with a "surfeit of cheap calories"—with potentially disastrous results.

EXERCISE 2.2

Write a critical response that reacts to the article you highlighted and annotated in Exercise 2.1.

CHECKLIST

Analyzing Texts

As you first read a text, keep the following questions in mind:

- ❑ Does the text provide any information about the writer's background? If so, how does this information affect your reading of the text?
- ❑ What is the writer's purpose? How can you tell?
- ❑ What audience is the text aimed at? How can you tell?
- ❑ What is the text's most important idea? What support does the writer provide for that idea?

Then, as you look more closely at the text, think about these questions:

- ❑ What information can you learn from the text's introduction and conclusion?
- ❑ What information can you learn from the thesis statement and topic sentences?
- ❑ Does the writer make any statements that suggest a particular **bias**? See 7c
- ❑ How would you characterize the writer's tone?
- ❑ Are there parallels between the writer's experiences and your own?
- ❑ Where do you agree with the writer? Where do you disagree?

CHAPTER 3

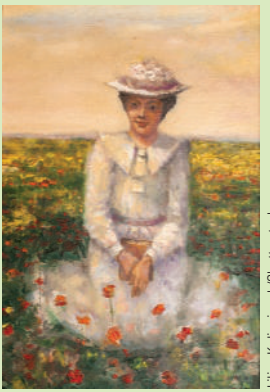
Reading and Interpreting Visuals

The texts you read in college courses—books, newspapers, and periodical articles, in print or online—are often accompanied by visual images. For example, textbooks often include illustrations to make complex information more accessible, newspapers use photographs to break up columns of written text, and websites use graphics of all kinds to add visual appeal.

Close-Up KINDS OF VISUALS

Visuals are used to convey information to supplement written text; they may also be used to persuade as well as to amuse.

Fine Art



Liliya Kulianionak/Shutterstock

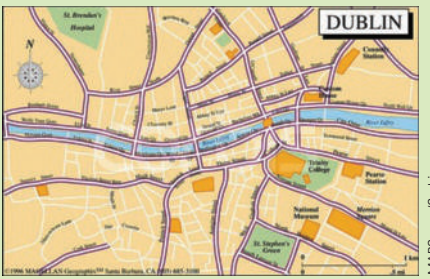
Profile of a Woman Wearing a Jabot (pastel on paper) by Mary Stevenson Cassatt (1844–1926).

Photographs

Julian W/Shutterstock.com

Chinese traditional opera actor.

Maps



MAPS.com/Corbis

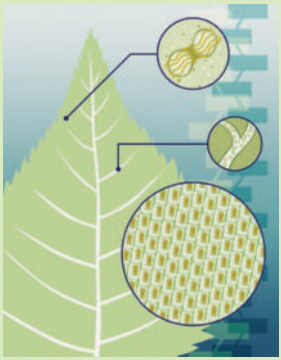
Map of Dublin, Ireland.

Cartoons

Stan Eales/CartoonStock.com

Cartoon by Stan Eales.

Scientific Diagrams



Don Bishop/Photodisc/Getty Images

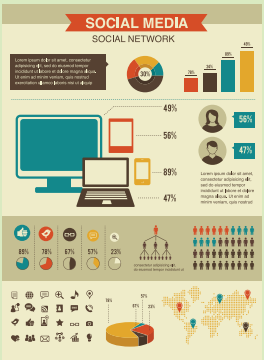
Plant engineering diagram.

Advertisements

The Advertising Archives

Mini Cooper ad.

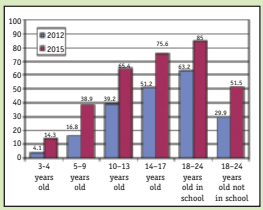
Infographics



Marish/Shutterstock.com

Social media infographic.

Bar Graphs



Bar graph from student essay.

Tables

Table 1

Relationship between Sleep Deprivation and Academic Performance

Grade Totals	Sleep Deprived	Not Sleep Deprived	Usually Sleep Deprived	Improved	Harmed	Continue Sleep Deprivation?
A = 10	4	6	1	4	0	4
B = 20	9	11	8	8	1	8
C = 10	10	0	6	5	4	7
D = 10	8	2	2	1	3	2
Total	31	19	17	18	8	21

Table from student essay.

3a Analyzing and Interpreting Visuals

Because the global audience is becoming increasingly visual, it is important for you to acquire the skills needed to read and interpret visuals as well as to use them in your own written work. (For information on incorporating visuals into your own writing, **see 6b2**.)

The powerful newspaper photograph shown in Figure 3.1, which depicts a Marine in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, uses a variety of techniques to convey its message. To **analyze and interpret** this photograph, you need to determine what strategies it uses to achieve its effect.

You might notice right away that contrasts are very important in this picture. In the background is the list of soldiers who died in the war; in the foreground, a lone member of a Marine honor guard stands in silent vigil, seemingly as static as the names carved in granite. Still, viewers know that the Marine is motionless only in the picture; when the photographer puts the camera down, the Marine will live on, in contrast to those whose names are listed behind him.

The large image of the Marine set against the smaller names in the background also suggests that the photographer's purpose is at least in

The whole world is watching.

Bryan Grigsby

Member of Marine honor guard passes the Vietnam memorial on which names of casualties of the war are inscribed.

FIGURE 3.1 Newspaper photograph taken at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

part to capture the contrast between the past and the present, the dead and the living. Thus, the photograph has a persuasive purpose: it suggests, as its title states, that "the whole world is watching" (and, in fact, *should* be watching) this scene in order to remember the past and honor the dead.

To convey their ideas, visuals often rely on contrasting light and shadow and on the size and placement of individual images (as well as on the spatial relationship of these images to one another and to the whole). In addition, visuals often use some words (captions, slogans, explanatory text), and they may also include color, animation, audio narration, and even musical soundtracks. Given the complexity of most visuals and the number of individual elements each one uses to convey its message, analyzing (or "reading") visual texts can be challenging. This task will be easier, however, if you follow the same **active reading** process you use when you read a written text.

3b Previewing a Visual

Just as with a written text, the first step in analyzing a visual text is to **preview** it, skimming it to get a sense of its subject, purpose, and emphasis. It is a good idea to begin thinking about who the audience might be and what techniques are being used to attract that audience's attention. At this stage, you may notice little more than the visual's major features: its central image, its dominant colors, its use of white space, and the most prominent words or lines of written text. Each of these elements sends a message about the product to the audience. Still, even these elements can give you a general idea of what the focus of the visual is and what purpose it might have.

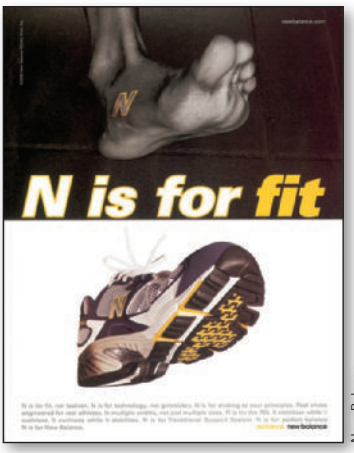


FIGURE 3.2 Magazine ad for New Balance sneakers.

For example, the New Balance ad shown in Figure 3.2 includes two large images—a foot and a shoe—both with the distinctive New Balance "N" logo. This logo also appears in the slogan "N is for fit," which has a prominent central position. The slogan is placed in the center of the advertisement, dividing the two images, with the text that explains the visual message appearing in much smaller type at the bottom of the advertisement. Yellow is used to highlight the logo, the shoe's tread, and the word *fit*.

3c Highlighting and Annotating a Visual

When you **highlight** a visual text, you mark it to help you identify key images and their relationship to one another. You might, for example, use arrows to point to important images, or you might circle key words or details. When you **annotate** a visual text, you record your reactions to the images and words you see. (If a visual's background is dark, or if you are not permitted to write directly on it, you can do your highlighting and annotating on small self-stick notes.)

A student in a composition class was asked to analyze the advertisement for Mini Cooper automobiles shown in Figure 3.3. When she visited the company website, she saw that Mini Cooper was appealing to consumers who value affordability and reliability as well as the company's commitment to "minimalism" and fuel efficiency. However, the website was also appealing to those looking for features such as high performance, sporty design, and creativity—for example, the opportunity to "build your own" car by choosing features and colors. The student's highlighting and annotating

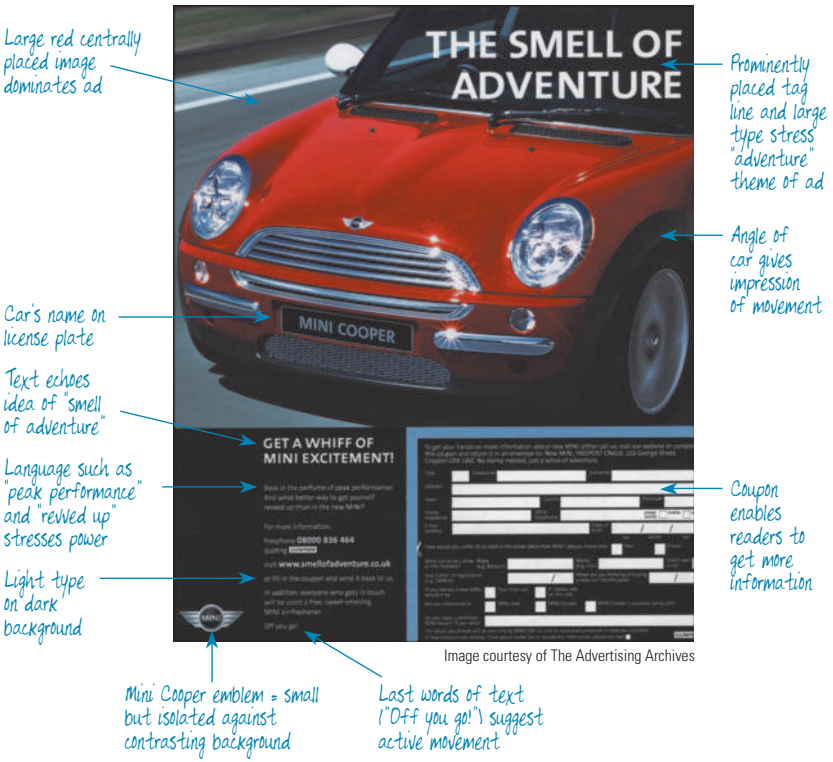


FIGURE 3.3 Mini Cooper ad.

focus on how the ad's written text and visuals work together to present the company's message: that the Mini Cooper is not just a practical choice but also one that offers possibilities for excitement and adventure.

CHECKLIST

Analyzing Visuals

- ❑ Who created the visual? Was the entire image created by one person, or is someone's work being used by another person for a particular purpose?
- ❑ For what purpose was the visual created? For example, does it seem to be primarily intended to be a work of art? Was it designed primarily to inform? To persuade? To entertain or amuse?
- ❑ Where did you access the visual? Where did it originally appear? What is the target audience for this publication?
- ❑ What scene does the visual depict? What message does this scene convey?
- ❑ What individual images are shown in the visual? What associations do you think these images have for the visual's intended audience?
- ❑ Does the visual include a lot of blank space?
- ❑ How large are the various elements (words and images)?
- ❑ Is the background light or dark? Clear or blurred? What individual elements stand out most clearly against this background?
- ❑ What general mood is suggested by the visual's use of color and shadow?
- ❑ Does the visual include any written text? What is its purpose? How are text and images juxtaposed?
- ❑ In general terms, what is the visual's message? How do its individual elements help to communicate this message?
- ❑ How would the visual's message or impact be different if something were added? If something were deleted?

Note: For information on analyzing a visual, **see 24b4**. For information on using visuals (such as editorial cartoons, photos, charts, and graphs) to support an argument, **see 10a**.

EXERCISE 3.1

Use the checklist above to help you write a paragraph in response to each of the following assignments:

1. On your way to campus or work, locate a billboard or a prominent sign (for example, on a train platform or bus shelter). What product or service does it promote? To what audience is it directed? How do you know? What does the image seem to assume about its intended audience (age, class, gender, and so on)?

2. Compare and contrast two magazine, television, or Internet advertisements for the same type of product (an automobile or cologne, for instance) that are aimed at two different audiences. How are the two ads different? How does each ad aim to reach its audience? What elements contribute to the persuasive message of each ad?
3. Select a website related to one of your courses. What visual elements of the site—images, typeface and type size, color, and so on—contribute to its usefulness as an information resource? How might the site benefit from additional (or fewer) visual features?
4. Select a chapter from one of your textbooks, and examine the way in which content is arranged on the pages. What visual elements (headings, lists, charts, tables, photographs, and so on) can you identify? How do these elements highlight important information?

EXERCISE 3.2

Write a paragraph in which you analyze the ad shown in Figure 3.4. Working with one or more classmates, consider the following questions:

- What audience is being addressed?
- What is the ad's primary purpose?
- What message is being conveyed?
- How do the various visual elements work together to appeal to the ad's target audience?

Editorial Image, LLC / Alamy Limited

FIGURE 3.4 Ad warning against texting while driving.

PART 2

Developing Essay Projects

PART 2

Developing Essay Projects

Frequently Asked Questions

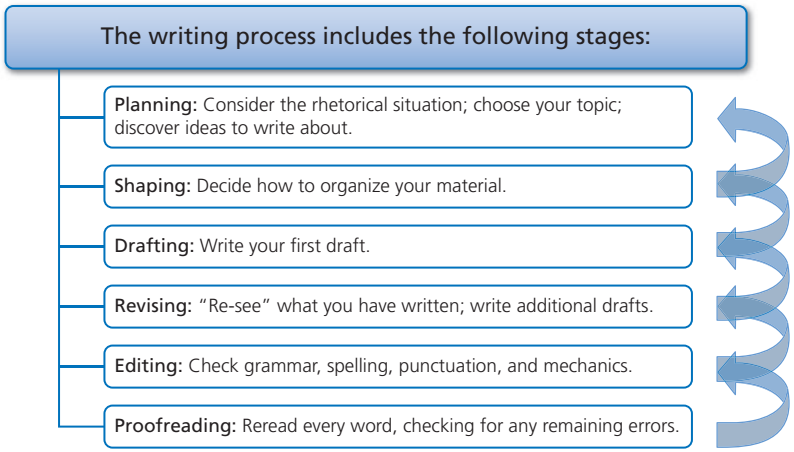
CHAPTER 4

Planning

4a Understanding the Writing Process

Writing is a constant process of decision making—of selecting, reconsidering, deleting, and rearranging material as you plan, shape, draft and revise, and edit and proofread your work.

The Writing Process



Of course, the neatly defined stages listed above do not communicate the reality of the writing process. In practice, this process is neither a linear series of steps nor an isolated activity. (In fact, in a digital environment, a significant part of the writing process can take place in full view of an online audience.) Writing is also often interactive: the writing process can be interrupted (and supplemented) by emailing, blogging, chat room discussions, or exploring the Internet.

Moreover, the stages of the writing process actually overlap: as you look for ideas, you begin to shape your material; as you shape your material, you begin to compose; as you develop a draft, you reorganize your ideas; as you

revise, you continue to discover new material. These stages may be repeated again and again throughout the writing process. In this sense, the writing process is cyclical. During your college years and in the years that follow, you will develop your own version of the writing process and use it whenever you write, adapting it to the audience, purpose, and writing situation at hand.

Close-Up COLLABORATIVE WRITING PROJECTS

In school—and particularly in the workplace—you will find that writing is increasingly a collaborative effort. On a regular basis, you will work with others to plan projects, do research, draft different sections of a single document (or different components of a larger project), and offer suggestions for revision. Software such as *Google Drive* allows users to compose documents synchronously and, with the History feature, to view changes made in a file or revert to an earlier version of the file.

EXERCISE 4.1

Write a paragraph in which you describe your own writing process. If you prefer, you may draw a diagram that represents your process. What do you do first? What steps do you return to again and again? Which stages do you find most satisfying? Which do you find most frustrating? Compare your paragraph with the paragraph written by another student in your class. How are your processes alike and different?

4b Computers and the Writing Process

See Ch. 32

See 33d2

Computers are essential for writing and communicating in both academic and **workplace** settings. In addition to using word-processing applications for typical writing tasks, writers may rely on programs such as ***PowerPoint***® or *Prezi* for giving presentations; *Publisher*® or an Adobe application, such as *Photoshop*, *Illustrator*, or *InDesign*, for creating customized résumés or brochures; and web-page authoring software such as *Dreamweaver*® or Web 2.0 technologies, such as *Wix*, *Weebly*, or *WordPress*, for creating Internet-accessible documents that include images, movies, and a wide range of visual effects.

With the prominent role of the Internet in professional, academic, and personal communication, it is increasingly likely that the feedback you receive on your writing will be electronic. For example, if your instructor uses

course management software such as *Blackboard*™ or *Canvas*, you may receive an email from your instructor about a draft that you have submitted to a digital drop box. Or, you may use discussion boards for attaching or sharing your documents with other students. Chat room and Net meeting software also allow you to discuss ideas collaboratively and to offer and receive feedback on drafts.

Although the specific tools you use may be course- or workplace-specific, you will still have to develop an efficient writing process. **Chapter 22** provides more comprehensive information on the options available to you as you compose in digital environments.

4c Understanding Your Assignment

Planning your essay—thinking about what you want to say and how you want to say it—begins well before you actually start recording your thoughts in any organized way. This planning is as important a part of the writing process as the writing itself. During this planning stage, you determine your **purpose** for writing and identify your **audience**. Then, you go on to focus on your assignment, choose and narrow your topic, and gather ideas.

Before you start to write, be sure you understand the exact requirements of your **assignment**. Ask questions if necessary, and be sure you understand the answers.

CHECKLIST

Understanding Your Assignment

To help you understand your assignment, consider the following questions:

- ❑ Has your instructor assigned a specific topic, or can you choose your own?
- ❑ Has your instructor indicated what genre you are to use? See 1d
- ❑ What is the word or page limit?
- ❑ How much time do you have to complete your assignment?
- ❑ Will you get feedback from your instructor? Will you have an opportunity to participate in peer review? See 6c2
- ❑ Does your assignment require research, and, if so, how many and what types of sources should you use?
- ❑ What format (for example, MLA) are you supposed to follow? Do you know what its conventions are? See Ch. 17
- ❑ If your assignment has been given to you in writing, have you read it carefully and highlighted key words?
- ❑ Have you reviewed (and do you understand) your instructor's grading criteria?

Rebecca James, a first-year composition student, was given the following assignment prompt.

> *Wikipedia* has become a common starting point for students seeking information on a research topic. Because anyone can alter articles in this database, the reliability of *Wikipedia* as a valid source of information has been criticized by members of the academic community. In an essay of about three to five pages, evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of using *Wikipedia* in college research. To support your assessment, focus on a *Wikipedia* entry related to one of your courses.

The class was given three weeks to complete the assignment. Students were expected to do some research and to have the instructor and other students read and comment on at least one draft.

4d Finding a Topic

Sometimes your instructor will assign a specific topic, but most of the time you will be given a general, structured assignment, which you will have to narrow to a **topic** that suits your purpose and audience.

From Assignment to Topic

Course	Assignment	Topic
American History	Analyze the effects of a social program on one segment of American society.	The effects of the GI Bill of Rights on American servicewomen
Sociology	Identify and evaluate the success of one resource available to the homeless population of one major American city.	The role of the Salvation Army in meeting the needs of Chicago's homeless
Psychology	Write a three- to five-page essay assessing one method of treating depression.	Animal-assisted therapy for severely depressed patients

Note: If your instructor permits you to do so, you can work with other students to narrow your topic.

Rebecca had no trouble thinking of ways she used *Wikipedia* to find general information, but she knew that the site was controversial in the

academic community because several of her instructors discouraged her from using it as a research source. As she composed her essay, she knew she would have to find a balance between the usefulness of *Wikipedia* on the one hand and its lack of reliability on the other.

Because her assignment was so specific, Rebecca was easily able to restate it in the form of a topic.

Topic: *Wikipedia* and college research

EXERCISE 4.2

College campuses across the United States are working to achieve sustainability, making an effort to be more sensitive to environmental concerns and to become "greener." With this exercise, you will begin the process of writing a three- to five-page essay in which you consider how your school is working toward this goal, what more it needs to do in the future, and how your suggestions for improvement will benefit your school.

Begin by researching *sustainability* online. Think about this issue as it applies to your school, and (with your instructor's permission) talk to your friends and classmates about it. When you think you understand what is being done (and what is not being done) to make your campus greener, list five specific environmental issues you could write about. Then, choose one of these areas of concern as the topic for your essay, and write a few sentences explaining why you selected this topic.

Your purpose in this essay will be to make recommendations for changes that could be adopted at your school. Your audience will be your composition instructor, members of your peer review group, and, possibly, a wider campus audience—for example, readers of your campus newspaper.

4e Finding Something to Say

Once you have a topic, you can begin to collect ideas for your essay, using one (or several) of the strategies discussed in the following pages.

1 Reading and Observing

As you read textbooks, magazines, and newspapers and explore the Internet, be on the lookout for ideas that relate to your topic. Films, television programs, interviews, letters, emails, and questionnaires can also provide material. But be sure your instructor permits such research—and remember to **document** ideas that are not your own. If you do not, you will be committing **plagiarism**.

See Ch. 16

When students in Rebecca's composition class were assigned to read *Wikipedia*'s policy statement, "Researching with *Wikipedia*," in preparation

MULTILINGUAL TIP

Don't use all your time making sure you are writing grammatically correct sentences. Remember, the purpose of writing is to communicate ideas. If you want to write an interesting, well-developed essay, you will need to devote plenty of time to the activities described in this section. You can then edit your work once you have determined and refined your ideas.

for their essay assignment, Rebecca learned about the problems of using *Wikipedia* in college-level research. This reading assignment gave her a wider perspective on her topic and encouraged her to look beyond her own experience with *Wikipedia*.

2 Keeping a Journal

Many professional writers keep print or electronic **journals** (sometimes in the form of blogs), writing in them regularly whether or not they have a specific project in mind. Journals, unlike diaries, do more than simply record personal experiences and reactions. In a journal, you explore ideas, ask questions, reflect on your thinking and the information you are processing, and draw conclusions. You might, for example, analyze your position on a political issue, try to solve an ethical problem, or trace the evolution of your ideas about an academic assignment.

One of Rebecca's journal entries appears below.

Journal Entry

I use *Wikipedia* all the time, whenever something comes up that I want to know more about. Once my roommate and I were talking about graffiti art, and I started wondering how and where it began. I went to *Wikipedia* and found a long article about graffiti's origins and development as an art form. Some of my instructors say not to use *Wikipedia* as a research source, so I try to avoid going to the site for essay assignments. Still, it can be really helpful when I'm trying to find basic information. A lot of business and financial terms come up in my accounting class, and I can usually find simple explanations on *Wikipedia* of things I don't understand.

3 Freewriting

When you **freewrite**, you write nonstop about anything that comes to mind, moving as quickly as you can. Give yourself a set period of time—say, five minutes—and don't stop to worry about punctuation, spelling, or grammar, or about where your freewriting takes you. This strategy encourages your mind to make free associations; thus, it helps you to discover ideas you probably aren't even aware you have. When your time is up, look over what you have written, and underline, circle, bracket, star, boldface, or otherwise highlight the most promising ideas. You can then use one or more of these ideas as the center of a focused freewriting exercise.

When you do **focused freewriting**, you zero in on your topic. Here, too, you write without stopping to reconsider or reread, so you have no time to be self-conscious about style or form, to worry about the relevance of your ideas, or to count how many words you have (and panic about how many more you think you need). At its best, focused freewriting can suggest new details, a new approach to your topic, or even a more interesting topic.

Excerpts from Rebecca's freewriting and focused freewriting exercises appear below.

Freewriting (Excerpt)

> I'm just going to list a bunch of things from my accounting class notes that I've recently looked up in *Wikipedia*: shareholder, stakeholder, strategic management, core competency, certified public accountant, certified management accountant, financial accounting, profit and loss. Not really sure which entry to focus on for this assignment. All the entries have strengths and weaknesses. I guess that's the point, but some *Wikipedia* articles are better than others. Maybe I'll choose an article that's sort of in the middle—one that provides some good basic info but could also be improved in some ways.

Focused Freewriting (Excerpt)

> I think I'm going to use the "Financial Accounting" article as my focus for this essay. It explains this accounting field pretty clearly and concisely, which is good. However, it does have some problems, which are identified at the top of the article: specifically, a lack of cited sources. This article seems to represent a good balance of *Wikipedia*'s benefits and drawbacks. I hope I can think of enough things to say about the article in my essay. I could start off with some background info on *Wikipedia* and then lead into the financial accounting example. That way, I can use the financial accounting article to support my points about *Wikipedia* in general.

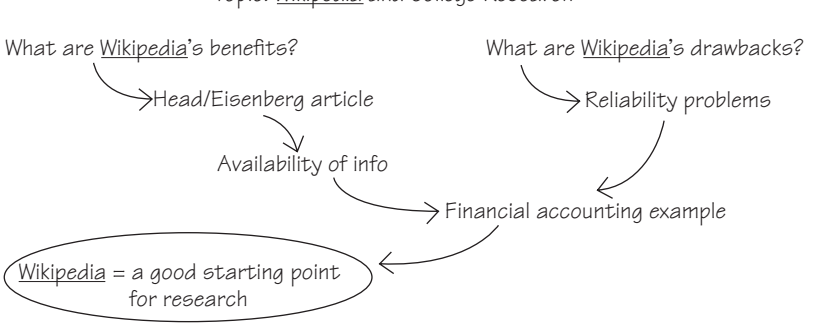
4 Brainstorming

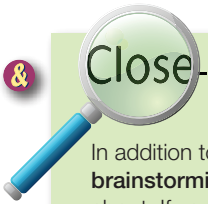
One of the most useful ways to collect ideas is by brainstorming (either on your own or in a group). This strategy enables you to recall bits of information and to see connections among them.

When you **brainstorm**, you list all the points you can think of that seem pertinent to your topic, recording ideas—comments, questions, single words, symbols, or diagrams—without considering their relevance or trying to understand their significance.

An excerpt from Rebecca's brainstorming notes appears below.

Brainstorming Notes (Excerpt)





Close-Up COLLABORATIVE BRAINSTORMING

In addition to brainstorming on your own, you can also try **collaborative brainstorming**, working with other students to think of ideas to write about. If you and your classmates are working with similar but not identical topics—which is often the case—you will have the basic knowledge to help one another, and you can share your ideas without concern that you will all wind up focusing on the same few points.

Typically, collaborative brainstorming is an informal process. It can take place in person (in class or outside of class), on the phone, in a chat room, or on a class discussion board. Some instructors lead class brainstorming sessions; others arrange small-group brainstorming discussions in class.

Whatever the format, the exchange of ideas is likely to produce a lot of material that is not useful (and some that is irrelevant), but it will very likely also produce some ideas you will want to explore further. (Be sure you get your instructor's permission before you brainstorm with other students.)

5 Clustering

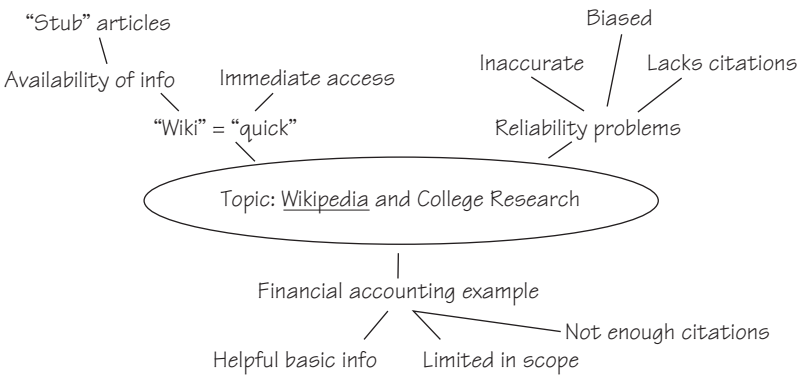
Clustering—sometimes called *webbing* or *mapping*—is similar to brainstorming. However, clustering encourages you to explore your topic in a more systematic (and more visual) manner.

Begin your cluster diagram by writing your topic in the center of a sheet of paper. Then, surround your topic with related ideas as they occur to you, moving outward from the general topic in the center and writing down increasingly specific ideas and details as you move toward the edges of the page. Following the path of one idea at a time, draw lines to create a diagram

(often lopsided rather than symmetrical) that arranges ideas on spokes or branches radiating out from the center (your topic).

Rebecca's cluster diagram appears below.

Cluster Diagram



6 Asking Journalistic Questions

Journalists ask the **questions** *Who? What? Why? Where? When?* and *How?* to ensure that they have explored all angles of a story, and you can use these questions to make sure you have considered all aspects of your topic. Asking these basic questions is an orderly, systematic strategy for finding material to write about.

Rebecca's list of journalistic questions appears below.

Questions

- Who uses *Wikipedia*, and for what purposes?
- What is a wiki? What are *Wikipedia*'s benefits? What are its drawbacks?
- When was *Wikipedia* created? When did it become so popular among college students?
- Where do people go for more information after reading a *Wikipedia* article?
- Why are people drawn to *Wikipedia*? Why do some instructors discourage students from using it as a research source?
- How can *Wikipedia* be used responsibly? How can *Wikipedia* be improved?

MULTILINGUAL TIP

Using your native language for planning activities has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, if you do not have the pressure of trying to think in English, you may be able to come up with better ideas. Also, using your native language may help you record your ideas more quickly and keep you from losing your train of thought. On the other hand, using your native language while planning may make it more difficult for you to move from the planning stages of your writing to drafting. After all, you will eventually have to write your essay in English.

7 Asking Journalistic Questions

If you have time, you can search for ideas to write about by asking a series of more focused questions about your topic. These **in-depth questions** can give you a great deal of information, and they can also suggest ways for you to eventually shape your ideas into paragraphs and essays.

In-Depth Questions

What happened? When did it happen? Where did it happen?	Questions suggest **narration** (an account of your first day of school; a summary of Emily Dickinson's life)
What does it look like? What does it sound like, smell like, taste like, or feel like?	Questions suggest **description** (of the Parthenon; of the electron microscope; of a website)
What are some typical cases or examples of it?	Question suggests **exemplification** (three infant day-care facilities; four popular fad diets)
How did it happen? What makes it work? How is it made?	Questions suggest **process** (how to apply for financial aid; how a bill becomes a law)
Why did it happen? What caused it? What does it cause? What are its effects?	Questions suggest **cause and effect** (the events leading to the Iraq War; the results of global warming; the impact of a new math curriculum)
How is it like other things? How is it different from other things?	Questions suggest **comparison and contrast** (of the popular music of the 1980s and 1990s; of two paintings)
What are its parts or types? Can they be separated or grouped? Do they fall into a logical order? Can they be categorized?	Questions suggest **division and classification** (components of the catalytic converter; kinds of occupational therapy; kinds of dietary supplements)
What is it? How does it resemble other members of its class? How does it differ from other members of its class?	Questions suggest **definition** (What is Marxism? What is photosynthesis? What is a wiki?)

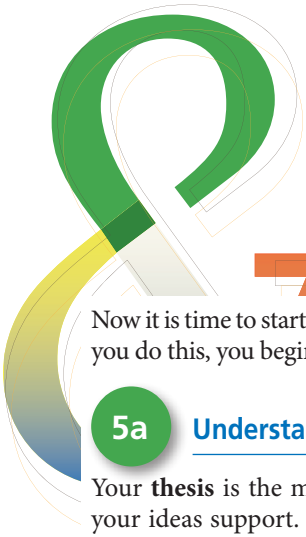
An excerpt from Rebecca's list of in-depth questions appears below.

In-Depth Questions (Excerpt)

What are the elements of a helpful *Wikipedia* article? Comprehensive abstracts, internal links, external links, coverage of current and obscure topics.

What are the elements of an unreliable *Wikipedia* article? Factual inaccuracy, bias, vandalism, lack of citations.

Note: Many college assignments require research. **See Part 4** for information on composing with sources.



CHAPTER 5

Shaping

Now it is time to start sifting through your ideas to choose those you can use. As you do this, you begin to **shape** your material into a thesis-and-support essay.

5a Understanding Thesis and Support

Your **thesis** is the main idea of your essay, the central point or claim that your ideas support. The concept of **thesis and support**—stating the thesis and then supplying information that explains and develops it—is central to much of the writing you will do in college and beyond.

PLANNING GUIDE

THESIS-AND-SUPPORT ESSAY

Your **assignment** will ask you to write an essay that supports a thesis.
Your **purpose** will be to present ideas and support them with specific reasons, examples, and so on.
Your **audience** will usually be your instructor or other students in your class.

continued

PLANNING GUIDE: Thesis-and-Support Essay *(continued)*

INTRODUCTION

Thesis statement templates:
- Although…, …
- Because…, it seems likely that…
- Many people believe…; however,…

- Begin by introducing readers to your subject.
- Use a specific introductory strategy to create interest.
- State your essay's thesis.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Topic sentence templates:
- The first (second, third) cause is…
- One (another, the final) example is…

Templates for introducing support:
- For example,…
- As…points out,…
- According to…,…

- Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that states the paragraph's main idea.
- In each paragraph, support the topic sentence with facts, details, reasons, examples, and so on.
- Arrange material in each paragraph according to a specific pattern of development: narration, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and so on.
- Include transitional words and phrases to connect ideas within and between paragraphs.

CONCLUSION

Closing sentence templates:
- All in all,…
- All things considered,…
- For all these reasons,…

- Begin with a restatement of your thesis (in different words) or a review of your essay's main points.
- Use a specific concluding strategy to sum up your ideas.
- Try to close with a memorable sentence.

5b Developing a Thesis Statement

An effective **thesis statement** has four characteristics:

1. **An effective thesis statement clearly communicates your essay's main idea.** It tells readers what your essay's topic is and suggests what you will say about it. Thus, your thesis statement reflects your essay's purpose.

2. **An effective thesis statement is more than a general subject, a statement of fact, or an announcement of your intent.**

Subject	Statement of Fact	Announcement
The Military Draft	The United States currently has no military draft.	In this essay, I will reconsider our country's need for a draft.

Thesis Statement: Although an all-volunteer force has replaced the draft, a draft may eventually be necessary if the US is to remain secure.

3. **An effective thesis statement is carefully worded.** Because it communicates your essay's main idea, your thesis statement should be clearly and accurately worded. Your thesis statement—usually expressed in a single concise sentence—should be direct and straightforward. It should not include abstract language, overly complex terminology, or unnecessary details that might confuse or mislead readers.

   Be particularly careful to avoid vague, wordy phrases—*centers on, deals with, involves, revolves around, has a lot to do with, is primarily concerned with*, and so on.

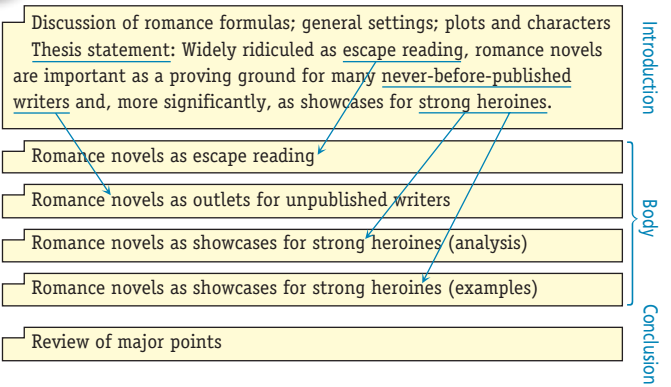
   The real problem in our schools ~~does~~ is not ~~revolve around~~ the absence of nationwide goals and standards; the problem is ~~primarily concerned with~~ the absence of resources.

   Finally, an effective thesis statement should not include words or phrases such as "Personally," "I believe," "I hope to demonstrate," and "It seems to me," which weaken your credibility by suggesting that your conclusions are tentative or are based solely on opinion rather than on reading, observation, and experience.

4. **An effective thesis statement suggests your essay's direction, emphasis, and scope.** Your thesis statement should not make promises that your essay will not fulfill. It should suggest where you will place your emphasis and indicate in what order your major points will be discussed, as the following thesis statement does.

   Effective Thesis Statement
   Widely ridiculed as escape reading, romance novels are important as a proving ground for many never-before-published writers and, more significantly, as a showcase for strong heroines.

   This thesis statement is effective because it tells readers that the essay to follow will focus on two major roles of the romance novel: providing markets for new writers and (more important) presenting strong female characters. It also suggests that the essay will briefly treat the role of the romance novel as escapist fiction. As the following diagram shows, this effective thesis statement also indicates the order in which the various ideas will be discussed.



As she tried to decide on a thesis statement for her essay about *Wikipedia* and college research, Rebecca James reviewed her freewriting, brainstorming, and other prewriting material and also talked with friends, most of whom shared her own positive opinion of *Wikipedia*. To stress the value of *Wikipedia* in college research yet still acknowledge the drawbacks her instructors had pointed out, Rebecca drafted the following thesis statement.

Thesis Statement: Despite its limitations, *Wikipedia* can be a valuable tool for locating reliable research sources.

EXERCISE 5.1

Working in a group of three or four students, analyze each of the following items, and explain why none of them qualifies as an effective thesis statement.

1. In this essay, I will examine the environmental effects of residential and commercial development on the coastal regions of the United States.
2. Residential and commercial development in the coastal regions of the United States
3. How to avoid coastal overdevelopment
4. Coastal Development: Pro and Con
5. Residential and commercial development of America's coastal regions benefits some people, but it has a number of disadvantages.
6. The environmentalists' position on coastal development
7. More and more coastal regions in the United States are being overdeveloped.
8. Residential and commercial development guidelines need to be developed for coastal regions of the United States.
9. Coastal development is causing beach erosion.
10. At one time, I enjoyed walking on the beach, but commercial and residential development ruined the experience for me.