

Academic Writing I

ACADEMIC WRITING I

This Pressbook was designed specifically for ESL students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

UW-MADISON ESL PROGRAM

University of Wisconsin-Madison



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INTRODUCTION

Online Textbook Overview

This Pressbook has been designed for students enrolled in the **ESL 117 Academic Writing I course** at the [**University of Wisconsin-Madison**](#). We recognize that you are likely coming to this course with experience writing in your own language and in English. Such experience is a good foundation we will build on to help you become a more confident and successful writer.

The information and knowledge check activities in this Pressbook complement the quizzes and assignments you will complete within the Canvas Learning Management System for this course. Although the knowledge check activities in this Pressbook are ungraded, you should complete all tasks throughout in order to build your understanding of the fundamentals of university level academic writing.

Welcome to ESL 117!

Here are some answers to questions you might have about ESL 117.

What is the purpose of ESL 117?

ESL 117 teaches you how to work with sources and use them in your writing. You will gain the skills and confidence to use information from sources in your own writing while avoiding plagiarism.

Am I allowed to use Generative AI in ESL 117?

The main objective of this class is to teach you strategies to become effective writers while using your own English independently, without reliance of artificial mechanisms of language production. Your instructors recognize the increasing use of AI in classrooms and its usefulness for language learners. Therefore, you will be allowed to use AI, but only in specific activities and only as directed by your instructors. You are not allowed to use AI in the production of major assignments.

Will ESL 117 help me in ESL 118?

Absolutely! The skills you learn in ESL 117 will be further developed and expanded upon in ESL 118. In fact, students who complete ESL 117 tend to do well in ESL 118.

Will ESL 117 help me in my other course work?

Yes! The skills from this course are transferable to any course in which you will complete reading and writing assignments. Many ESL 117 students have reported that ESL 117 has helped them successfully complete writing assignments for other courses.

UW-Madison is very serious about supporting international students throughout their academic careers. [The Global English Language Learning and Teaching Program](#) strives to provide students with academic and language support to succeed. Your teacher looks forward to helping you develop yourself as an independent reader and as a student throughout this course.

PART I

UNIT 1 ACADEMIC SKILLS INTRODUCTION

In this Unit

- Introduction to the fundamental features of academic writing
- Strategies for in-depth and focused reading
- Strategies for note-taking

1.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC WRITING

What is Academic Writing?

The course materials in this textbook are designed to help you succeed in the kinds of writing you will do in college. Academic writing is a formal style that focuses on clear ideas, organized paragraphs, and precise language. As we begin this course, we will look at the key features that make academic writing effective and appropriate for college-level work

Common characteristics of academic writing

Academic writing:

- is cohesive and stays on topic
- is organized in a clear, logical order
- avoids plagiarism by using original writing and proper citation
- uses formal and precise language
- supports ideas with clear evidence and explanation

Why is academic writing important?

Academic writing helps readers understand ideas clearly and evaluate information responsibly. Using shared writing conventions allows writers and readers to communicate effectively in college and academic settings. When these features work together, writing becomes clear, credible, and appropriate for college-level work.

Knowledge Check: Make sure you understand these important terms



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=59#b5p-1>

2.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Introduction to Academic Writing

Writing at the university level involves more than sharing personal experiences or opinions. In this course, you will learn how to **critically read academic sources** and use information from those sources to support your ideas. You will also learn how to **conduct research using library databases** and how to **write a research paper** using academic conventions.

Academic Writing as a Process

Academic writing in college is a **step-by-step process**, not something completed in one sitting. Writers complete smaller tasks—such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and checking sources—to develop a strong final paper.

This process is **iterative**, which means writers often return to earlier steps to improve their thinking, organization, and clarity. Each small assignment in this course is designed to help you practice these skills and prepare for the final version of your work.

Key Takeaways

- College writing is based on research and evidence, not only personal opinion.
- Learning the writing process helps you manage large assignments step by step.
- Practicing each stage of writing builds confidence and stronger final papers.
- These skills prepare you for research projects in other college courses.

Knowledge Check: Review the steps in the writing process



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=316#h5p-2>

Adapted from [Writing a Research Paper](#), from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center

3.

ACADEMIC READING SKILLS

Characteristics of a Critical Reader

Academic reading is an active process. It involves engaging with a text, thinking carefully about ideas, and connecting information across sources. In this course, you will read several articles to build a basic understanding of key concepts and issues related to a shared theme.

Developing **critical reading skills**—the ability to analyze, question, and reflect on a text—is an essential part of academic success.

A critical reader does more than understand words; they think about *meaning, purpose, and connections*. A critical reader:

- Asks questions about the ideas in the text while reading
- Pays attention to the author's tone, purpose, and perspective
- Looks for connections between different texts
- Connects new ideas to prior knowledge and personal experiences
- Reflects on what they have read and evaluates what they do and do not understand
- Uses web-based tools (such as translators or AI tools) to support understanding, not to replace the act of reading

Exploratory Reading Techniques

Before reading closely, use these strategies to develop a general understanding of the article:

- Skim the article
- Read the title, subtitles, and headings
- Examine charts, graphs, or images
- Read the first and last paragraphs
- Identify the topic and main idea

After this initial overview, read the entire article carefully.

Active Reading Strategies

As you read, interact with the text to improve comprehension:

- Highlight ideas that interest you
- Highlight ideas that relate to your experiences or prior knowledge
- Make notes or annotations in the margins
- Write questions about ideas you find confusing or important
- Write brief comments or reactions to the author's ideas

Using Web-Based Tools Effectively

Web-based tools can support academic reading when used responsibly.

Translation Tools

- If you use Google Translate or another translator, you must also read the text in English
- Record key vocabulary words in a digital notebook or vocabulary app to build academic vocabulary

Generative AI Tools (e.g., ChatGPT)

You may use AI to **support understanding**, such as:

- Asking clarification questions
- Requesting simpler explanations
- Asking for examples

Example prompts:

- Give me an example of [topic].
- Explain [topic] at a 10th-grade level.

- Explain the historical significance of [topic] in five sentences.

What AI Should NOT Do

- **✗ Replace reading** the text yourself.
- **✗ Tell you what to think** about the text.
- **✗ Write your notes** or annotations for you.
- **✗ Be trusted without checking.** It can be unclear or incorrect.

⚠ **Use AI wisely.** AI tools can generate incorrect or misleading information (“hallucinations”). Use them for general understanding, and always verify important information before using it in your academic work.

Key Takeaways

- Academic reading is **active**. You should think, ask questions, and make connections.
- Critical readers notice **ideas, tone, and meaning** in a text.
- **Skimming** helps you understand a text before reading it closely.
- **Highlighting** and **note-taking** help you remember and understand ideas.
- Tools like translators and AI can help you understand—but they *should not replace reading*.

4.

NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

Note-Taking for Academic Reading

To understand college-level readings more effectively, it is important to use strong reading and note-taking strategies. Good note-taking helps you stay focused, remember key ideas, and prepare for writing or discussion.

There is no single “correct” way to take notes. You should try different methods, such as highlighting, annotating, or writing short summaries, and decide which strategies work best for you and for different types of readings.

Highlighting

Highlighting is a note-taking strategy where you mark important words, phrases, or sentences in a text to help you focus on key ideas and find them again easily when you review.

Highlighting helps you:

- Identify important ideas or key terms
- Locate information quickly when you review the text later
- Focus on main ideas instead of every detail

 **Tip:** Do not highlight too much. If everything is highlighted, nothing stands out. Highlight only the most important words, phrases, or sentences.

Example:

A doctor in the United Kingdom has come out with a bold and extraordinary statement regarding the problem of childhood obesity. Dr Matthew Capehorn said that parents who had obese children under the age of 12 should be charged with parental neglect, meaning that they could have their kids taken away from them. Dr Capehorn said that in a case where children were seriously under-nourished and had not been fed properly the police and local authorities were allowed to take away the children into care and the same should apply to children who are obese. Dr Capehorn will be rallying other doctors for support for his proposals at the British Medical Association (BMA) annual conference later in June. Dr Capehorn argues that a child who is clinically obese is at serious risk of health problems which are just as serious as for a child who is malnourished. He said that parents should be educated on how they need to feed their children and given advice about nutrition but if they fail to take this advice the social services should step in and protect the children from their own obesity. The doctor also argued that if parents were made aware that their children could be taken away into care unless they made a serious commitment to their health they might sit up and listen more to nutritionists and people giving dietary advice.

Annotating

To **annotate** means to write notes in the margins of a text (on the sides, top, or bottom of the page).

When you annotate, you might:

- Write **main ideas** in your own words
- Write **questions** about ideas you do not understand
- Write **comments or reactions** to what you read

Annotating helps you actively engage with the text. This deeper engagement makes it easier to summarize, discuss, and write about the reading later.

Example:

What is the nature of these changes?	The rapid increase in the number of Chinese students in America is leading to significant changes in China's secondary-education system . With Beijing's official backing, and facing increasing demand from parents, public schools in China's largest cities are heading toward a two-track system—the traditional stream that prepares students for the national college-entrance examination and a new one that prepares them for the SAT Reasoning Test and the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL . Some of China's very best public schools, where the smartest and wealthiest students congregate , will one day become international in focus . Get prepared: A wave of young Chinese students is about to wash across America.	
Worsening the income gap?		
That's why they need 116, 117 + 118	English presents their biggest problem, yet the real language problem is a subtler one, and one that's not really a language problem at all. It's a thinking problem. Because to read and write and analyze English like a native speaker, Chinese students first have to start thinking like a native speaker . This is difficult: when they've long been trained to think in Chinese.	How or why would this influence a person's ability to understand the context?
How can Chinese students...	In <i>Prose and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain</i> , the Tufts University cognitive neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf writes that brain scans of native English and Chinese speakers show that each group relies on different mental processes to read . English is phonological, so English readers can sound out words when they read; written Chinese is not, so hundreds of mutually unintelligible Chinese dialects can use the same written script. English speakers access audio- sensory parts of their brain to "hear" a text, while Chinese speakers use visual- sensory parts to "see" a text , she explains. To teach a Chinese person to read well in English thus entails a significant rewiring of the brain , and while science says this is possible, there's nothing quick or easy or fun about it.	
More evidence is needed. Even native English speakers misinterpret English texts.	There's another complication. Westerners and Chinese have different mind- sets, and even fluent English-speaking Chinese can misinterpret English texts. In <i>The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why</i> , the social psychologist Richard Nisbett explains that Western civilization emphasizes debate and logic, while Chinese civilization prefers harmony and groupthink . Good English builds a formal structure of Aristotelian logic, while good Chinese demonstrates a chaotic stream-of-consciousness beauty .	Guaranteed? Is this really true of Chinese academic writing?

Color-Coding

Color-coding is a type of annotating that uses **different colors or markings** to organize information.

One suggested approach:

- On your first reading, use **yellow** to highlight information that seems important
- On later readings, use different colors to:
 - Identify **types of information** (e.g., examples, definitions, expert opinions)
 - Mark information related to a specific part of your essay (e.g., one body paragraph or the introduction)

You may also:

- Underline text
- Circle key words

- Draw boxes around important ideas

✓ **Important:** Create a **key** at the beginning of the article to explain what each color or mark means. This will help you understand your notes later.

Example: Notice how the student has used color and a stylus to “write” directly in the article. Note the “key” at the top left of the page.

===== (un)employment ===== climate change.

effect of climate change.



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RECENT RESEARCH ON EUROPEAN INITIATIVES TO REDUCE POLLUTION IN TOURISM

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Abstract Over time, tourism adapted to climatic conditions, responding to changes and finding different solutions. Where tourism is a major source of income for the economy and for individuals (small and large enterprises), it found multiple solutions for effective consumer actions (sustainable, local). The purpose of this paper is to present tourism alternatives that realize benefits that are perspectives: positive consequences for society, economy, culture, and also initiatives that support tourism development compatible with present and future needs.

Key words

Tourism pollution, climate change, sustainability, environment

Introduction

Tourism, over time adapted to climatic conditions, responding to changes and finding different solutions. Where tourism is a major source of income for the economy and for individuals (small and large enterprises) were found efficient multiple solutions to serve consumers (sustainability, local).

In 2007, at the "International Conference on Climate Change and Tourism" was published "Dares Declaration", a study that responded to emergency issues regarding climate change.

It is known that climate change represented and represents a current issue. Temperatures rise, precipitation types are changing, glaciers and snow melt, so weather conditions lead to risks like floods and droughts. These extreme events may become more frequent and increase their intensity. It is very likely that global warming occurred since the mid-20th century may be due in large part to higher greenhouse gas concentrations. The global temperature increased by about 0.8°C in the past 100 years and is projected to grow further.

Climate change is also an additional pressure on ecosystems, leading to movements towards north and higher altitude areas for many species of animals and plants. They negatively affect agriculture, forestry, electricity production, tourism and infrastructure in general.

Estimates of the economic effects of climate

the effects of climate change

Key results

Rise of 0.4-0.7°C a reduction in GDP would be between 0-10% and even higher for poor countries.

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors, recorded in the last decades, significant increases being able to support the economic development of a country and an example of this would be Italia.

Many development policies include tourism in their agenda.

Conceptual issues

Tourism is the red thread of this work and an important element in the global economy, according to WTO being defined as "the activities of the person traveling outside his or her usual environment for less than a specified period of time and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited". The link between tourism and the natural environment is very tight, quality and abundance of natural resources is of vital importance in achieving national and global interest (Miller, 1975, Stan-dă-lă-ște-puș Că-tă, Thomas T. T.) take about the environment as "the aggregate of external conditions that influence the life of an individual or population, specifically the life of man and other living organisms on the earth's surface".

These environmental influences on life and the individual are reflected in tourism. There is considerable evidence demonstrating the intrinsic importance of weather and climate for tourist decisions

Subsistence effect of climate change

Example: Notice how this student has used software to drop in comments (represented by the squares) throughout the article. Note the “key” at the top right of the page.

SPECIAL ISSUE

Resilience of African migrant women: Implications for mental health practice

Procsga#1

General

Procsga#2

Procsga#3

CA

Reflection

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ABSTRACT: Migrants from areas affected by war, especially refugee migrants, are susceptible to mental health issues. In addition to recognizing trauma, health professionals, such as mental health nurses, need to be aware of the strength and resilience of refugees and migrants. The capacity to provide trauma-informed care that is shaped by the recognition of clients' strength and resilience is required to meet the current demand of multiculturalism resulting from an increased global migration. To facilitate increased awareness about West African women's resilience prior to migration and support trauma-informed care, we used a qualitative strength-based storytelling approach with 22 West African women residing in Sydney, Australia. Thematic analysis of the women's stories identified two major themes: *When the World Falls Apart and Survival Instinct Strong*. Findings revealed that past personal experiences significantly influenced participants' strength and resilience and contributed to their mental health. Mental health professionals such as nurses can play an important role by incorporating knowledge about the resilience of migrants and refugees into providing appropriate trauma-informed care.

KEY WORDS: adversity, African migrant women, life challenges, mental health, resilience, strength-based approach, trauma, trauma-informed care.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, international migration continues to increase (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Developed countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), and Canada continue to experience increasing numbers of people migrating from Africa (Davidson et al., 2017). United Kingdom: National Statistics, 2009). Australia ranks in the top three countries for permanent settlement of asylum seekers and refugees along with Canada and the

USA (Department of Immigration & Border Protection, 2017). The number of African-born people migrating to Australia has increased by over 50% from 147 978 in 1980 to 300 000 in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), and almost half of this increase was to women. In this paper, the term 'migrants' encompasses all classes of migrant newcomers, including asylum seekers, refugees, and voluntary migrants.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of mental well-being to migrant health. Consequently, there is a need for a deeper understanding of different dimensions of the migration process and migrant people's experiences (Smith & Anderson, 2014). A strength-based approach broadening the focus beyond problem-based research to more complete understanding is increasingly recommended. However, there is a paucity of studies about African people, especially West African people living in Australia, and their resilience (Sakarellos-Kordecki et al., 2016).

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Can I use AI for Note-Taking?

Using AI for Note-Taking

You **may use AI to support your reading**, but AI should **not take notes for you**. Note-taking is an important learning skill, and you learn more when **you read, think, and write the notes yourself**.

How AI Can Help

- Explain **difficult words or sentences**
- Give **simple definitions** or examples
- Help you understand a **confusing idea**
- Answer questions like: “*What does this paragraph mean?*”

Example prompts

- “Explain this sentence in simple English.”
- “What does this paragraph mean in one or two sentences?”
- “What does the word ____ mean in this reading?”

What AI Should NOT Do

- **✗** Write your notes for you
- **✗** Summarize the whole article for you
- **✗** Replace reading the text yourself
- **✗** Give you notes that you copy and paste

How to use AI Ethically and Appropriately

- Always **read the text yourself first**
- Use AI **only when something is unclear**
- **Write your own notes in your own words**
- Check AI answers carefully—they can be wrong or unclear
- If required, **say that you used AI** (for example, in a Writer’s Memo)

You are responsible for your notes. AI can help you *understand*, but **you must do the thinking and the note-taking**.

Reflect on your Note-Taking Style

Everyone takes notes differently. Think about the methods you use now and consider their strengths and weaknesses. You might:

1. Write notes by hand in a notebook
2. Type notes in a document (Word, Google Docs, etc.)
3. Annotate a printed article by hand
4. Use a stylus on a tablet or touchscreen
5. Insert typed comments in a digital article
6. Create an outline of the article
7. Take group notes in a shared Google Doc
8. Use different colors for different types of information

Final Tip

Choose a note-taking system that works for **you**. Whatever method you use, make sure your notes are clear and detailed enough that you can understand them, not just tomorrow, but **one or two weeks later**, when you need them for writing or studying.

Key Takeaways

- Note-taking helps you **understand, remember, and use** what you read.
- **Highlighting** helps you find important ideas quickly, but do not highlight too much.
- **Annotating** helps you think more deeply by writing ideas, questions, and comments.
- **Color-coding** helps organize information and connections for writing.
- AI tools can help clarify difficult ideas, but they should **not replace reading or note-taking**.
- Your notes should always reflect **your own thinking**, not copied AI output.

5.

IN-DEPTH READING

Strategies for In-Depth Reading

Exploratory reading helps you get a general sense of a topic. This type of reading is wide and open-ended. You read to build background knowledge, learn basic ideas, and see what information is available. You might skim a few articles, browse different sources, or read quickly to understand the overall topic.

Focused (in-depth) reading is different because you read with a clear and narrow purpose. In this type of reading, you slow down, pay close attention to important details, and try to understand the writer's main ideas, arguments, or explanations. Focused reading is used when you need to understand a difficult text, find evidence for an assignment, or answer a specific research question.

For example, if you have a research question, you can use it to guide your focused reading by looking for information that directly answers that question. This makes your reading more purposeful and helps you use your time effectively.

Comparison of Exploratory versus In-Depth Reading

Exploratory Reading

- Read to get a general idea about a topic.
- Look for basic information and background knowledge.
- Skim or read quickly.
- Useful at the beginning of a research project.
- Helps you decide what to study in more detail.

In-Depth Reading

- Read with a clear, specific purpose.

- Look for important details, arguments, or key concepts.
- Read slowly and carefully.
- Useful when answering a research question or analyzing a difficult text.
- Helps you understand the text deeply and find evidence for assignments.

Can I use AI for in-depth reading?

Using AI for Reading

Yes. **AI can support both exploratory and in-depth reading when used carefully and responsibly.** AI tools can help you better understand a text, but they should **support your reading, not replace it.**

When using AI for in-depth reading:

- Use **specific and focused prompts** related to your reading goal
- Ask for help understanding key concepts, terms, or examples
- Ask questions about historical, cultural, or academic context
- Use AI to clarify ideas *after* you have read the text yourself

Example prompts

- “Explain this paragraph in simple English.”
- “What does the author mean by this idea?”
- “How does this paragraph connect to my research question?”
- “Can you explain this concept with a simple example?”

What AI Should NOT Do

- **✗** Replace **slow, careful reading**
- **✗** Be used **before you read the text yourself**

How to use AI Ethically and Appropriately

- Read the text **first**, carefully
- Use AI only for **specific questions**

- Always return to the **original text** for evidence and quotes
- Write ideas in **your own words**
- Check AI explanations—they can be **wrong or too simple**

Remember that AI tools can make mistakes, so always **check important ideas against the original text** and rely on your own reading for evidence and quotations.

Key Takeaways

- Exploratory reading helps you learn basic ideas and background information.
- In-depth reading has a clear purpose and requires slow, careful reading.
- Use in-depth reading to understand main ideas, arguments, and evidence.
- A research question can guide what information you focus on.
- AI tools can support understanding, but they should not replace reading the text yourself.

PART II

UNIT 2: PARAPHRASING AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

In this Unit

- Introduction to the features of an effective paraphrase
- Techniques for paraphrasing
- Overview of types of academic misconduct
- Strategies for avoiding plagiarism

6.

PARAPHRASING INTRODUCTION

Preview Questions:

1. What is paraphrasing?
2. When do we have to paraphrase?
3. Why do we have to paraphrase?
4. Paraphrasing is a really difficult thing to do. Why can't I just use a direct quotation every time I want to use somebody else's idea as supporting evidence for my own writing?
5. What are the criteria for a good paraphrase?
6. Why do I have to learn how to paraphrase? Can't I just use an AI-based paraphrasing tool to write my paraphrases for me?

Introduction to Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is an important skill we use in our daily lives. We might share a story we heard from a friend. When we do this, we use our own way of explaining the story. Learning how to paraphrase effectively will be useful when you write about the ideas you have read in sources.

Although there are many AI-based paraphrasing tools, learning how to paraphrase yourself is an important skill in the journey of developing your own writing.

Criteria of a good paraphrase

1. A good paraphrase has the **same meaning as the original**.
 1. All main ideas included.
 2. No new ideas added.

2. A good paraphrase is **different from the original**.
 1. Uses no more than THREE words in a row from the original source.
 2. Changes grammar and vocabulary as much as possible.
3. A good paraphrase **refers directly to (or cites) the original source**.
 1. Includes the name of the author or the name of the source (a citation).
4. A good paraphrase **does not rely exclusively on AI-based paraphrasing tools**.
 1. You must be able to evaluate the effectiveness yourself and ensure you have the correct citation.

Attribution: Citation Examples

In-text citations (APA Style)

- Baker (2017) reports that 70% of Instagram users are under 35 years old (p. 3).
- Seventy percent of Instagram users are under 35 years old (Baker, 2017, p. 3).

Adapted from: Dollahite, N.E. & Huan, J. (2012). *SourceWork: Academic Writing for Success*.

Paraphrase examples

1) **Writer** focused (also known as **lead-in** citations) versus **idea** focused (also known as **parenthetical citations**)

Notice how the examples meet the above criteria, yet are slightly different.

Original: “More than 150 million people use Facebook to keep in touch with friends, share photographs and videos and post regular updates of their movements and thoughts.” – From David Derbyshire, “Social Websites Harm Children’s Brains,” (2009), p. 2.

Paraphrase 1 (writer focused or lead-in): Derbyshire (2009) states that over 150 million people frequently share photos and updates with friends through Facebook (p. 2).

Paraphrase 2 (idea focused or parenthetical): Facebook has enabled over 150 million users to share pictures and updates regularly with their friends (Derbyshire, 2009, p. 2).

2) Paraphrase of 2 or more sentences

Below are two methods for paraphrasing multiple sentences. (Note that the paraphrased information is shorter than the original; this example combines the skills of paraphrasing and summarizing.)

Original: “The pandemic tested the resilience of colleges and universities as they executed online learning on a massive scale by creating online courses, adopting and adapting to unfamiliar technologies, engaging faculty en masse in remote teaching, and successfully meeting the instructional needs of students. Those experiences and lessons should not be discarded. The next phase for higher education in a post-COVID-19 world is to harness what worked well during the emergency response period and use those experiences to improve institutional practices for the benefit of both internal and external constituencies in the future.” From John Nworie, “Beyond COVID-19: What’s next for online teaching and learning in higher education,” (2021), p. 7.

Paraphrase 1 (writer focused or lead-in): Nworie (2021) recommends that the valuable lessons higher education institutions learned in response to the pandemic be applied to future education models. The development of large-scale online courses while adapting to technological challenges in the process did allow students educational needs to be met (p. 7).

Paraphrase 2 (idea focused or parenthetical): The valuable lessons higher education institutions learned in response to the pandemic can be applied to future education models; the development of large-scale online courses while adapting to technological challenges in the process did allow students educational needs to be met (Nworie, 2021, p. 7).

Knowledge Check: Practice what you learned about paraphrasing

Exercise: Decide which of the paraphrases below is most effective.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=5#b5p-4>

Knowledge Check



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=5#b5p-7>

From [Excelsior Online Writing Lab](#)

7.

PARAPHRASING TECHNIQUES

Learning How to Paraphrase

Learning to paraphrase on your own helps you understand ideas more deeply and express them in your own voice. If you depend only on AI, you miss the chance to build these important academic skills. When you combine paraphrasing techniques, such as changing vocabulary, adjusting sentence structure, and focusing on the meaning, you create stronger, more original writing that shows real comprehension

Technique #1: Tell-a-friend method

This method involves using a new way to explain the meaning of the original sentence.

1. Read the original sentence(s).
2. Make sure you understand the sentence(s) completely.
3. Cover the original source.
4. Imagine you are talking to a friend and try explaining the information to your friend. Write down your explanation.
5. Read the original source and make sure you have retained the original meaning.
6. (See Technique #4 below: Using AI-based paraphrasing tools to improve your paraphrasing.)

EXERCISE

Practice the Tell-a-Friend method using the proverbs below.

Proverb: You can't judge a book by its cover.

Paraphrase: Things sometimes look different from what they really are.

Match the proverb with its paraphrase. (Answers located below.)

Proverb	Paraphrase
1. Don't put all your eggs in one basket.	a. You did something exactly right.
2. You hit the nail on the head.	b. When a person really wants to do something, they will find a way to do it.
3. Don't count your chickens before your eggs have hatched.	c. Be optimistic. Even difficult times will lead to better days.
4. Every cloud has a silver lining.	d. One should not risk everything they have in a single venture.
5. Where there's a will, there's a way.	e. You shouldn't make plans for something that might not happen.

Technique #2: Chunking method

Another way to paraphrase is to break the original into smaller units, or “chunks.” This method can be useful for longer passages.

1. Read the original sentence(s) and make sure you understand the sentence(s) completely.
2. Divide the sentence(s) into chunks (these are often grammatical clauses). Underline each chunk, focusing on how you can divide the sentence into phrases.
3. Re-write each chunk in your own words.
4. Combine these rewritten chunks into one or more sentences to create a paraphrase. Think about how the ideas are related to each other; you might need to include additional words (e.g. transition phrases) as you combine the chunks.
5. You may re-order the chunks to make the order of ideas different from the original, but if you do, make sure the paraphrase still makes sense.

Chunking examples

#1 Original: “As more and more people have become increasingly used to sharing and collaborating outside the workplace via social networks, (chunk 1) they are coming to expect firms to be more open and collaborative places too (chunk 2).” From Author Unknown, “Yammering Away at the Office,” (2010), p. 1.

Rewordings of chunks:

- 1) people have grown more accustomed to using social media platforms for collaboration and sharing ideas beyond their jobs
- 2) there are increasing expectations that companies will encourage more collaboration.

Paraphrase: Workers are expecting companies to encourage more collaboration since many people have grown accustomed to using social media platforms for collaboration and sharing ideas beyond their jobs (“Yammering away at the office,” 2010, p. 1).

#2 Original: “Psychologists have argued that digital technology is changing the way we write (chunk 1) in that students no longer need to plan essays before starting to write (chunk 2) because word processing software allows them to edit as they go along (chunk 3).” From David Derbyshire, “Social websites harm children’s brains,” (2009), p. 2.

Rewordings of chunks:

- 1) psychologists claim that computers and software are influencing the writing process
- 2) students can skip the planning process
- 3) word processing programs help them revise throughout the writing process

Paraphrase: Because word processing programs help students revise their essays throughout the writing process and even skip the planning process altogether, psychologists claim that computers and software are influencing the writing process (Derbyshire, 2009, p. 2)

Adapted from Dollahite, N.E. & Huan, J. (2012). *Source Work: Academic Writing for Success*.

Technique #3: Paraphrasing plus Summarizing method

Sometimes you will be able to identify one or two specific sentences to paraphrase. However, it is more common to use information from a longer passage, like a paragraph or two, or a section or sections of an article. To do this effectively, you must combine the skills of paraphrasing and summarizing.

- Paraphrasing: Restating an individual sentence that contains key ideas in your own words, keeping the same length and meaning.
- Summarizing: Expressing an overall idea of a longer passage in your own words, keeping the same meaning, but making it much more concise (shorten it).

Follow these steps to summarize AND paraphrase:

1. Identify the original chunk(s) of text that you would like to cite in your paper.
2. Read the chunk(s) several times to make sure you have accurate understanding and are able to “tell a friend” what the chunks are about.
3. In the margins, identify key words, synonyms, or ideas that describe each chunk (color-coding can help identify similar ideas).
4. Think about the most logical sequence of these ideas; you could number them.
5. Write your summary, keeping it short (1 to 3 sentences). Set it aside.
6. Re-read the ideas in the margins and your summary and rewrite any parts you feel could be improved; repeat steps 5-6 as needed.

The example below illustrates how a student used the skills of paraphrasing and summarizing below to condense a paragraph into a single sentence.

Original: “The pandemic tested the resilience of colleges and universities as they executed online learning on a massive scale by creating online courses, adopting and adapting to unfamiliar technologies, engaging faculty en masse in remote teaching, and successfully meeting the instructional needs of students. Those experiences and lessons should not be discarded. The next phase for higher education in a post-COVID-19 world is to harness what worked well during the emergency response period and use those experiences to improve institutional practices for the benefit of both internal and external constituencies in the future.” From John Nworie, “Beyond COVID-19: What’s next for online teaching and learning in higher education,” (2021), p. 7.

Rewordings of chunks:

- 1) valuable lessons learned
- 2) higher education institutions developed large-scale online courses
- 3) as a response to the pandemic
- 4) adapting and overcoming challenges in the process
- 5) should be applied to future education models

Paraphrase: Nworie (2021) recommends that the valuable lessons learned as higher education institutions developed large-scale online courses as a response to the pandemic, adapting and overcoming challenges in the process, should be applied to future education models (p. 7).

Proverbs matching answers: 1-d, 2-a, 3-e, 4-c, 5-b

Technique #4: Using Online Tools

AI-based paraphrasing tools can help you improve your writing. Most tools have free and premium versions, which have more features. Examples include:

1. [Gemini](#)
2. [QuillBot](#)
3. [WordViceAI](#)
4. [ChatGPT](#)
5. [Grammarly](#)

The best way to use AI-based paraphrasing tools is to write your own version first and then use the tool to find alternative ways to express your paraphrase. Being able to write a paraphrase on your own will allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of AI-generated paraphrases.

Benefits of using AI-tools:

1. By seeing how the tool rewrites your text, you can learn to identify where your writing could be improved. You can learn to use more effective vocabulary, or how to structure your sentences in a more effective way.
2. You can expand your vocabulary and learn effective collocations.
3. You can spot grammar errors you make and learn to avoid and correct them.

Follow these guidelines when using AI tools for writing paraphrases:

1. Write the paraphrase on your own first. Then paste your paraphrase into the AI with a clear prompt to check its effectiveness.
2. When using AI to support your writing, always review the original text to ensure the AI accurately

maintained the meaning of the original passage.

3. Some tools only change the words and not the overall structure. If they tool only uses synonyms, you must change the grammar yourself.
4. Always check the citation format. Do not assume the tool will use the correct citation.

To learn more about how to cite your use of AI Tools see the [UW Libraries' Research Guides on Citing Generative AI](#).

Which Generative AI may I use in this course?

- In this course we will **sometimes** use [Gemini](#) or [CoPilot](#). CoPilot is available to all UW-Madison students and staff for free.
- [Log into CoPilot here](#) using your wisc.edu email address or visit <https://copilot.microsoft.com/> and log in with your Wisc credentials.

Knowledge Check: Review paraphrasing concepts



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=255#h5p-9>

From [Excelsior Online Writing Lab, Paraphrasing – Try it Out](#)

8.

PARAPHRASING TOOLKIT

Build a Paraphrasing Toolkit

This toolkit gives you strategies to change words and sentence structure in academic writing. You do not have to use them all at the same time, but you should change the vocabulary and the overall structure.

Use a Combination of Techniques

1. use synonyms (college → university)
2. change word form (e.g. change part of speech from an adjective to noun: collaborate → collaboration)
3. change verb to negative (stayed the same → did not change)
4. move phrases (chunks) to change sentence structure
5. change from active to passive voice (conducted → was conducted)
6. use connecting words to combine shorter sentences (and, so, but)

Use a Checklist for Choosing Synonyms

- **Definition:** Have I chosen the most accurate definition?
- **Context:** Does the word make sense in this sentence? Is it appropriate?
- **Collocation:** Does the word effectively collocate (go together) with the words before and after it? For example, we write “to conduct research,” not “to make research.”
- **Register:** Is the word too casual or too formal? Is it written in academic style?
- **Alternatives:** Is it possible that there is no good synonym for the word? For example, some words do not have obvious synonyms like proper names or specialized words related to your topic.

Use Collocations Resources to Confirm Synonyms

Collocations are **words that often go together naturally** in English. Native speakers expect to hear these word combinations.

Example:

-  *conduct research*
-  *make research*

Even though *make* is grammatically correct, English speakers normally say **conduct research**.

For more information, see [English Club Website on Collocations](#)

Resources

- [Ozdic Collocations Dictionary](#)
- [WordReference English Collocations](#)
- [Oxford's Online Collocation Dictionary](#)
- [Skell Sketch Engine website](#) – a collection of examples, collocations, and synonyms helpful for checking how a particular word or phrase is used in various contexts.

Apply: Practice using the Paraphrasing Toolkit

EXERCISE 1: Select appropriate synonyms.

Directions: Use the original sentence below to practice using websites to choose a synonym for “**used to**.” Then try again with a word of your choice.

“As more and more people have become increasingly **used to** sharing and collaborating outside the workplace via social networks, they are coming to expect firms to be more open and collaborative places too.” From Author Unknown, “Yammering away at the office,” (2010), p. 1.

Example with “used to”

1. Type “**used to**” into a [Thesaurus](#)
2. Choose one possible synonym, such as *accustomed*
3. Check the synonym in a learner dictionary such as [Oxford Learner’s Dictionary](#)
4. Read the definition and examples.
5. Check the synonym in a [collocations](#) website (see options above).
6. See how the word is used in real sentences by typing it in [Skell Sketch Engine Corpus](#)
7. Decide if the synonym works in the context of the sentence.

Your turn: Repeat the steps above with a word of your choice.

EXERCISE 2: Compare AI-paraphrasing Tools

Directions: After you write the paraphrase in your own words, use an **AI-paraphrasing tool** to improve your work.

1. Experiment with different tools to find one that works for you.
2. Consider upgrading to a “premium” membership so that you can use the “shorten” feature (which allows you to combine the skills of paraphrasing and summarizing).
3. Note common grammar errors you make and take notes on how to fix them.
4. Note vocabulary replacements in an [online vocabulary “notebook”](#) to expand your vocabulary.

9.

PARAPHRASING PRACTICE

Skills Practice



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=87#b5p-5>

10.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism means using someone else's words, ideas, data, or creative work **without giving proper credit**. This can happen in writing, presentations, discussions, code, images, or multimedia projects.

In university work, if an assignment **appears to show that you created the words or ideas**, then they **must actually be your own**, or you must clearly cite the source.

Plagiarism can be **intentional** or **unintentional**, but **both are academic integrity violations** and can have serious consequences.

Two Types of Plagiarism

- Deliberate plagiarism = cheating, theft, fraud
- Accidental plagiarism = not following the conventions when writing for publication or for university assignments.

The penalties for plagiarism are serious and could include:

- Failing the assignment
- Failing the course
- Disciplinary action by the university, including possible expulsion

Deliberate Plagiarism

Deliberate plagiarism is **academic dishonesty**. It happens when a student **knowingly presents work created by someone else as their own**. This includes:

- Copying from another student

- Downloading or buying assignments, essays, or code
- Submitting work written by a friend, tutor, or family member
- Submitting AI-generated work (from tools like ChatGPT or other generative AI tools) **as if you wrote it yourself**, when your instructor does not allow this
- Sharing your work so another student can submit it
- Working collaboratively when individual work is required, and submitting very similar assignments

You know the work is not yours, but you submit it anyway.

Accidental Plagiarism

Accidental plagiarism happens when students **do not follow academic conventions**, often because they are still learning how to use sources correctly. This includes:

- Forgetting to cite a source
- Paraphrasing too closely to the original text
- Using quotations without quotation marks
- Mixing your ideas and source ideas without clear citations
- Using Generative AI for help (e.g., brainstorming, drafting, or paraphrasing) **without acknowledging it**, when disclosure is required by the course
- Assuming common knowledge when it is not actually common in academic writing

You did not intend to cheat, but the result still counts as plagiarism.

Generative AI and Plagiarism

Generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar systems) can **produce original-sounding text**, but they **do not count as your original thinking**.

In this course:

- You must **follow instructor instructions** about whether and how AI tools may be used.
- If AI use is allowed, you may be required to **cite or describe how you used it**.
- Submitting AI-generated text as your own work **without permission or disclosure** may be treated as **deliberate plagiarism**.

When in doubt: **ask your instructor before submitting the assignment.**

Knowledge Check



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=95#b5p-6>

From [Excelsior Online Writing Lab: Try it Out: Check your Understanding of Plagiarism](#)

Key Takeaways

- **Plagiarism** means using others' words or ideas **without credit**.
- Your work must be **your own** or **clearly cited**.
- There are **two types**:
 - **Deliberate** = cheating on purpose
 - **Accidental** = citation mistakes
- **AI-generated work is not your own writing.**
- Follow your instructor's rules for **using and citing AI**.
- Plagiarism can cause **serious penalties**.
- If unsure, **ask your instructor**.

For a Deeper Dive, Watch the videos on Plagiarism.

Video 1: Avoiding Plagiarism, produced by [GCFLearnFree.org](#). (2018, September 13). [Avoiding plagiarism. \[Video\]](#). YouTube.



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=95#oembed-1>

Video 2: What is Plagiarism and How to Avoid it, produced by BrockLibrary. (2014, September 2). [*What is plagiarism and how to avoid it.*](#) [Video]. YouTube.



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=95#oembed-2>

Video 3: For a visual representation of the types of plagiarism, watch this video (3:58) created by WriteCheck-Videos:



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=95#oembed-3>

11.

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

How Can I Avoid Plagiarizing?

Whenever you write academics essays, you will be expected to present both your own original ideas as well as the ideas of other writers in order to help support your own argument. Academic essays often contain a balance of new, original ideas and the ideas of others that you have read. It is therefore important to make sure that it is clear which ideas are yours and which ones come from other authors and sources.

Integrate other's ideas in your writing by:

- **Quoting:** Use another person's exact words in quotation marks. Quoting requires very little effort on your part.
- **Paraphrasing:** Rewrite another person's ideas by using your own language. Paraphrasing requires more effort and thinking on your part than simply quoting.
- **Summarizing:** Rewrite another person's ideas by using your own language BUT in a concise way. Summarizing is the most difficult method because you must think critically about another writer's words and ideas and condense them so that you only convey the most essential information found in them.

To avoid plagiarism you must cite:

- **Quotations:** When using an author's specific word or words, you must place those words within quotation marks and you must credit the source.
- **Information:** If a piece of information isn't common knowledge, you must provide a source.
- **Ideas:** An author's ideas may include their opinions or conclusions.
- **Facts, statistics, events:** Any information that most people are unlikely to know without conducting research.

How to Cite Generative AI

The standards for citing AI tools are still evolving. It is important that you confirm your instructor's expectations for both using AI and documenting that use.

To learn more about how to cite your use of AI Tools see the [UW Libraries' Research Guides on Citing Generative AI](#).

Knowledge Check



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=362#b5p-11>

From Excelsior Online Writing Lab, [How to Cite Sources: Proper Citations](#)

Language and information that you DON'T have to paraphrase

- Technical terms and phrases, such as “standard deviation” (in Statistics).
- Basic common knowledge:

General common knowledge is factual information considered to be in the public domain, such as birth and death dates of well-known figures, and generally accepted dates of military, political, literary, and other historical events. In general, factual information contained in multiple standard reference works can usually be considered to be in the public domain.

Field-specific common knowledge is “common” only within a particular field or specialty. It may include facts, theories, or methods that are familiar to readers within that discipline. For instance, you may not need to cite a reference to Einstein’s *Theory of Relativity* in a paper for a physics class but you must be sure that this information is so widely known within that field that it will be shared by your readers.

- If in doubt, be cautious and cite the source.

Adapted from: The University of Wisconsin, [Writing Center page on quoting and paraphrasing](#)

Knowledge Check



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=362#h5p-10>

From [Excelsior Online Writing Lab, Try it Out: Common Knowledge](#)

Key Takeaways

- Academic writing uses **your own ideas AND ideas from other writers**.
- Always make it **clear which ideas are yours** and **which ideas come from a source**.
- You can use other writers' ideas in **three main ways**:
 - **Quote**: Use the **exact words** from a source and put them in **quotation marks**.
 - **Paraphrase**: Rewrite the idea in **your own words**.
 - **Summarize**: Write the **main idea only**, using fewer words.
- **Quoting is the easiest**, but **summarizing is the hardest**.
- You must **cite the source** when you use:
 - Quotes
 - Ideas or opinions
 - Facts, statistics, or events
 - Information that is **not common knowledge**
- If you use **Generative AI tools** (like ChatGPT), you must:
 - Follow your instructor's rules
 - Explain or cite how you used the tool, if required

- You **do NOT need to cite**:
 - Technical terms (e.g., “standard deviation”)
 - General common knowledge (well-known facts)
 - Field-specific knowledge that **everyone in the field already knows**
- If you are **not sure** whether to cite, **cite the source**.
- Asking questions and checking the rules can **help you avoid accidental plagiarism**.

PART III

UNIT 3: SUMMARIZING AND RESPONDING TO WRITING

In this Unit

- Introduction to the features of an effective summary
- Strategies for writing a summary
- Integrating the skills of paraphrasing and summarizing
- Techniques for responding to texts

12.

SUMMARIZING

Preview Questions:

1. What are the features of a good summary?
2. What is the difference between a summary and a paraphrase?
3. How do the skills of summary and paraphrase work together?
4. Why are summaries and paraphrases useful?
5. Why do I have to learn how to write a summary? Can't I just use an AI-based tool to summarize text for me?

Introduction to Summarizing

Summarizing, like paraphrasing, is your explanation of another person's ideas. We often use summaries in both speaking and writing to tell listeners or readers our ideas quickly and clearly. For example, if a friend asks you to tell her about a movie you saw recently, you would not spend two hours telling her everything that happened in the movie. Instead, you would probably just briefly tell her about the movie's main plot and characters.

In academic writing, summarizing is important when we use ideas from other sources to support our own arguments. This skill differs from paraphrasing. Instead of trying to reproduce an idea in its entirety as expressed by the author, we try to express the main idea(s) without including details from the original.

Using an AI-based tool can help you summarize and understand a text. It is also important to be able to extract the most important points on your own to develop your reading and critical thinking skills. If you can "tell a friend" what a text is about, this will help you remember the information and develop your paraphrasing skills.

Five criteria for a good summary

1. Acknowledges the source:

1. refers to the writer and/or the title of the work in a formal way.
2. uses attributive language and reporting verbs throughout the summary to remind the reader that you are summarizing someone else's ideas.

2. Contains only the most important information from original source:

1. the topic of the article,
2. the author's thesis or main point,
3. and a few important main supporting points needed to explain the thesis/main point.

3. Accurately expresses the source:

1. maintains the exact same meaning of the source you are summarizing.
2. conveys the tone of the original text.
3. may follow the same organization of the original text, but it is also acceptable to reorganize the author's ideas in your summary as long as you capture the same meaning.

4. Is short and condensed:

1. A good summary is **shorter** than the original source.
2. It could be as short as one sentence (which contains the author's thesis) or may be a paragraph or longer, in which case it will include the main supporting points.

5. Uses your own original language:

1. A good summary paraphrases any information taken from the original source
2. Any language that comes directly from the original source must be put in quotation marks. Direct quotations should be used **minimally**.

Adapted from: Dollahite, N.E. & Huan, J. (2012). *Source Work: Academic Writing for Success*.

Knowledge Check



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<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=100#b5p-12>

From Excelsior Online Writing Lab, [Summarizing and Plagiarism](#)

13.

TECHNIQUES FOR IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS IN AN ARTICLE

Identifying Main Ideas in an Article

In order to write an effective summary, you need to be able to identify the main ideas. Below are three methods you might use when reading a text to identify the most important information.

Technique 1: Underlining main ideas

1. Read the article several times to get a good understanding of the information.
2. Use a highlighting tool to identify ideas you think are important.
3. Go back to the beginning of the article and read the highlighted ideas again. Make sure you understand what they mean.
4. Paraphrase these highlighted ideas. Use these paraphrased ideas when you write your summary.

Technique 2: Grouping ideas

1. Read the entire article. Pay attention to where the topic in the article seems to shift. Notice how groups of paragraphs seem to be about a similar topic.
2. Insert a horizontal line between these different sections of the article.
3. Divide a longer article into sections, or groups of paragraphs, to help you identify the various topics discussed in the article.
4. Look at these large sections and write a short phrase that explains the topic of each section.
5. The topics of these sections are usually the author's main supporting points. This will help you determine which information is most important and should be included in the summary.
6. Use your list of phrases you wrote to describe each section to write your summary.

Technique 3: Summary chart

1. Read the entire article. Take notes in a grid for each paragraph or section of the article. Dividing the article into sections will allow you to summarize ideas from more than one paragraph together.
2. Write main ideas in one column and supporting ideas in another column.
3. Use your notes to write your summary. You might not use all the supporting ideas in your summary.
4. **NOTE: For a selective summary, summarize ONLY the information that is relevant to the topic of the assignment. Information that is not directly relevant to the topic can be omitted.**

Example from Xinlin Jiang (2023), “Madison becomes second hometown for international students” ([full article available through UW News webpage](#))

Topic of the selective summary: the strategies that the students used for making connections

paragraph(s)	main idea	supporting details
1-2	International students build connections before arriving by using online platforms.	– Ruohan Yuan sought advice from alumni online. – She met a sophomore who helped her learn about Madison
3-4	Joining student organizations helps international students develop a sense of belonging	– Camille Liu joined university clubs and organizations. – She felt like she had a family on campus
5	Participating in campus events helps students feel part of the university culture.	– Camille enjoyed football games and school spirit activities.
6-8	Some students build connection with themselves through independence and solitude	– Eduardo learned to embrace time alone and grew personally.

Adapted from: Dollahite, N.E. & Huan, J. (2012). *Source Work: Academic Writing for Success*.

Technique 4: Use AI to Summarize a text

Use this technique for reading and understanding texts as a study technique.

1. Read the entire text yourself. If needed, use a translator, but always make sure you read the text in English.
2. Try to pick out the important points by yourself. Identify the author’s thesis.

3. Then use an AI tool to summarize the text (e.g. [QuillBot Summarize](#), [WordTune](#), [ChatGPT](#), etc.). Determine how long you want the summary to be (one paragraph? one page? A double-spaced page is about 250 words).
4. Compare the summary with your own notes.

If you are asked to summarize a text for homework, you should try to write the first draft on your own. Your instructor will let you know how and if you can use AI to generate a summary to compare to your own version. Remember, an AI-generated summary might not include correct attribution and the format might not meet the assignment's expectations (e.g. the first sentence might not include the elements outlined in the assignment).

14.

SUMMARY TYPES: GLOBAL AND SELECTIVE

Global Summary versus Selective Summary

A “**global**” **summary** includes all of the main ideas from an article. A “**selective**” **summary** identifies specific information within an article about one specific topic and summarize only that information. This “selective” sort of summarizing closely resembles one of the ways sources are used in research writing. Writing a selective summary, therefore, will help prepare you for using sources in any type of research paper you might write.

Steps in writing a Selective Summary by Yourself

1. Read the article carefully and take notes in your own words.
2. Identify (underline, highlight, etc.) the information that you have been asked to select.
3. Paraphrase the information, summarizing “chunks” (sections) of text when appropriate.
4. Arrange the information in a logical order.

Steps in writing a Selective Summary using AI Tools

Using AI to draft a Selective Summary may help you in studying and understanding texts. See the guidelines below.

1. Choose an appropriate AI Tool.
2. Craft a prompt to instruct the AI how to extra information related to the topic.
3. Always check the summary for accuracy.

Two formats for introducing a selective summary

Imagine you are writing a selective summary for the example assignment: Summarize only the information about what Gambino says about *why people use devices to connect with each other*.

The introduction of a selective summary includes:

1. the overall main idea of the article and immediately after this general overview,
2. the *next sentence* indicates the *narrower scope*, (for this example assignment below, the *information related to why people use these devices*.)

1. Two-Sentence Format

In (title of article), (author's name) (date) discusses (article thesis). (sentence about narrowed topic)

Example: In the article "Madison Becomes Second Hometown for International Students," Xinlin Jiang (2023) describes the experiences of several international students who attended UW-Madison and the factors that drew them to the university. *More specifically, Jiang explains the strategies that three of the students used to make personal connections at the university.*

2. Three-Sentence Format

(Name of author) + (article topic) + ("title of article.") The second sentence explains the author's thesis. The third sentence is about the *narrowed topic*.

Example: Xinlin Jiang (2023) writes the experience of international students at UW-Madison in "Madison Becomes Second Hometown for International Students." Jiang describes the experiences of several international students who attended UW-Madison and the factors that drew them to the university. *More specifically, Jiang explains the strategies that three of the students used to make personal connections at the university.*

EXERCISE: Analyze the formats above.

1. How should the author's name be written? Which name comes first?
2. What immediately follows the author's name?

3. Which words are capitalized in the title?
4. Why is this title in quotation marks? (Hint: What type of source is it? What type of source is *italicized*? What type of source is expressed in quotation marks “?”)
5. What verb tense is used to express the main idea?
6. What’s the difference between the longer and shorter formats? What’s the advantage of using each one?

Example Selective Summary

Read the example below. The topic the writer has narrowed to is the **efforts colleges have been making to support international students**.

Selective Summary of “U.S. Colleges Focus on Making International Students Feel at Home.”

According to Michael Sewall (2010) in “U.S. Colleges Focus on Making International Students Feel at Home” colleges are helping international students join the campus community. Sewall highlights how universities have created new social programs and university courses to help assist new international students transition to life in the United States. One strategy Sewall examines is how colleges are trying to connect international students with the local community. This has been done primarily by connecting these students with host families and local volunteer opportunities. In addition, Sewall describes universities’ efforts to help international students integrate into campus life by matching them with domestic students. Administrators recognize that building personal connections and friendships helps international students adapt culturally and linguistically. Finally, Sewall explains how colleges are creating courses and programs that familiarize international students with American culture. Special courses with global or cultural themes have been developed and are sometimes required. Some courses involve assignments which entail interaction between American students and international students. Sewall stresses that these efforts will help not only international students but their American counterparts as well.

Reference

Sewall, M. (2010, August 24). U.S. colleges focus on making international students feel at home. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/US-Colleges-Focus-On-Making/124108>

You can read the full article below or [access it online](https://www.chronicle.com/article/US-Colleges-Focus-On-Making/124108).

U.S. Colleges Focus on Making International Students Feel at Home

By Michael Sewall *The Chronicle of Higher Education* August 24, 2010

When Ivan Sekyonda, a 23-year-old student from Uganda, came to study in the United States, he felt lonely. After all, his native country wasn't well represented at Binghamton University. But he eventually made friends, including American and international students, and he became more comfortable on the campus. He gives credit to Binghamton's international-student office.

"The orientation staff made us feel welcome and made it easy to understand what was going on," says Mr. Sekyonda, a rising senior studying computer engineering. "They knew we were probably experiencing some culture shock and feeling a bit homesick, and they were willing to work with us and be patient with us."

For colleges focused on internationalizing their student bodies, like Binghamton, getting foreign students onto their campuses is only half the battle. If these students end up socializing and studying only with one another, administrators say, then they—and the colleges' American students—don't benefit much from the experience.

"If you want to be international at all, you've got to be thinking holistically," says Allan E. Goodman, president of the Institute of International Education. "It really is a continuous process of checking in with international students and making sure they're not in over their heads."

To ensure that international students are well integrated into campus life, colleges have been putting more effort into orientation as well as social and academic programming that engages all students on campus.

"The challenge is to encourage those students to break out of their comfort level and explore the university dynamic," says Ellen H. Badger, director of international student and scholar services at Binghamton, which has won an award for its campus-internationalization efforts. "But integration doesn't need to be forced—it's happening throughout campus every day."

Connecting With the Community

All institutions face the challenge of bringing foreign students into the fold, but this can be particularly difficult for community colleges. It can be hard to integrate a campus where students commute in, go to their classes, and then return to work or families.

Some community colleges have handled this by focusing on off-campus activities. Northcentral Technical College, in Wisconsin, runs a program in which 41 families have agreed to act as mentors for international students. Another 19 families host students in their homes. If a mentor family is going on a picnic or to a baseball game, the family can call Northcentral's international office and invite students to join in.

Bonnie Bissonette, the associate dean of business and international education at Northcentral, says the col-

lege also encourages international students to do volunteer work, starting at orientation, and these efforts help increase their confidence.

“We use a strong web of support for our students,” Ms. Bissonette says. “Right away they learn that by volunteering and getting out in the community, it helps them make connections with people.”

Erode Laborde came to Northcentral from Haiti last year and is studying small-business management at the college. Although Mr. Laborde says he was worried at first about coming to the United States, he adjusted by getting involved right away in a variety of activities. He joined the college’s business and international clubs, and he has volunteered for more than 250 hours in the community. Those connections helped him find emotional support and raise money when an earthquake ravaged his home country in January.

“Even though it was really hard in Haiti, and there was a lot of emotion, there was a lot of support from the community here,” he says. “Coming here and seeing how people got along with us—it was amazing.”

Making a Match

Michael Adams, president of Fairleigh Dickinson University, has frequently spoken about the need to do a better job of integrating international students on campus. When American students study abroad, colleges expect them to learn a lot both in and out of the classroom, Mr. Adams says. “We need to apply that same mind-set for the students we have coming here,” he says.

“Too many institutions have looked at foreign students as sources of revenue,” he adds. “But if you’re there to prepare people for this next generation of leadership, they need to know people. And there are informal ways to do that.”

Fairleigh Dickinson’s Office of Global Learning was designed, in part, to address this challenge. One program, called the Global Enterprise Network, provides training and internships for international graduate students who want to learn about business development.

Some colleges also have created programs in which American students are matched up with international students to help them hone their English skills and introduce them to campus life.

Binghamton University offers such a matching program, as well as one that pairs native English speakers with students who speak English as a second language.

“This allows international students to further their English skills on one side and [for each] to learn more about the [other’s] culture,” says Rebecca Johnson, a Binghamton senior from Delaware who participated in the ESL program.

The University of California at Los Angeles, which enrolled about 5,000 international students this past academic year, offers a “global-siblings” program that allows domestic students to function as both resources and friends to international classmates.

Uniting Cultures

Some campuses are creating course work specifically for international students, or to bring them together on projects with their American counterparts.

During the last academic year, the University of Southern California began offering a course called “The United States: An American Culture Series,” which teaches foreign students about food, customs, and lingo.

A criminal-justice professor at Northcentral Technical College asks his students to develop a project comparing U.S. laws with those in another country. He encourages students to find someone on campus who is from their assigned country and simply get to know that person as a way to learn about the laws there.

Still, integrating the classroom isn’t easy, especially in science and technology fields, in which many international students are enrolled.

“Students in these fields are very driven and focused, and so are the Americans,” says Mr. Goodman, of the Institute of International Education. “It’s possible a lot of students are clustered in labs doing what they came here to do and doing a very good job at it, but it may be more difficult for that integrated learning experience.”

Binghamton has been working on that kind of integration for the past 15 years, ever since the university made internationalization part of its strategic planning. Among the changes during that time: doubling international enrollment; requiring that all undergraduates take global-proficiency courses; and adding a host of other programs focused on integrating international students into campus life.

“It’s important to attract students based on their intellectual interests and not just cultural ones,” Ms. Badger says. “If you’re truly internationalizing your campus, the communication is going in both directions. You are integrating domestic students into the international students’ culture as well.”

Mr. Sekyonda, the Ugandan student, has taken advantage of Binghamton’s programs. He volunteers at a local library, serves as the secretary for the National Society of Black Engineers at Binghamton, and participates in the African Student Organization and Bard in the Yard, a student group that performs Shakespeare productions.

Last fall, Mr. Sekyonda volunteered during the international-student orientation, sharing his experiences to help other students transition to the United States. The integration has gone so well, he says, that “students don’t even realize I’m international.”

Stems for introducing a summary

The sentence stems below can help you develop your command of academic language.

- According to Megan Gambino (2010) in her article “How Technology Makes Us Better Social Beings,” (main idea).
- Megan Gambino’s (2010) article “How Technology Makes Us Better Social Beings” argues (main idea).
- Author Megan Gambino (2010) in her article “How Technology Makes Us Better Social Beings” claims (main idea).
- In “How Technology Makes Us Better Social Beings,” Megan Gambino (2010) states (main idea).
- In “Yammering Away at the Office” (2015), the author maintains (main idea). (*If no author is listed for the source.*)

Stems for narrowing the scope in a selective summary

- In particular, Gambino _____.
- More specifically, Gambino _____.
- Gambino focuses on _____.
- In their discussion / analysis / etc., Gambino _____.

You must give credit to the author throughout the summary by using reporting verbs. The frames below are also known as “**summary reminders**” because they “remind” the reader that the ideas are not from the author of the summary, but from the author of the original article.

Stems for explaining ideas in a summary

- The main idea is _____.
- Gambino explains how _____.
- Gambino argues why _____.
- Gambino states that _____.
- Gambino also argues / claims / maintains / believes that _____.
- Gambino discusses _____ and explores the issue of _____.
- The article focuses on _____ and explores issues of _____. (If the author is unknown.)
- Name(s) goes/go on to say/explain/argue/demonstrate that _____.

Stems for introducing examples

- For example, / For instance, _____.
- _____, such as _____.

- As an example of this, _____.
- To illustrate, _____.

Stems for concluding ideas in a summary

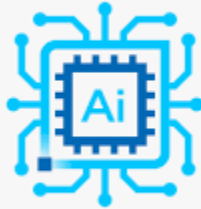
- Gambino concludes (that) _____.
- In summary, Gambino explores the issue of _____ and explains to the reader that it is important because _____.
- In summary, Gambino explores the issue of _____ and explains to the reader that _____.
- In conclusion, the main idea of the article is _____.
- In conclusion, Gambino's main idea is _____.

NOTES:

- Use the **last name** of the author throughout the summary (after the introductory sentence(s)). Avoid using “the author(s)” or “the writer(s).”
- These verbs are usually used in the *present tense* (discusses, states, explains).
- Use gender neutral language (e.g. “they”) when using pronouns for the author.

15.

SUMMARIZING AND GENERATIVE AI



Am I allowed to use Generative AI in ESL 117 Academic Summaries?

One of the main objectives of ESL 117 is to teach you strategies to become efficient and effective readers who can use information from published sources appropriately in your own writing. We encourage you to do this reading and writing using your own English, without reliance on artificial mechanisms of language production.

Your instructors, however, recognize the increasing use of AI in classrooms and its potential usefulness for language learners. Therefore, you will sometimes be allowed to use AI in ESL 117, but **only in specific activities and only as directed by your instructors**.

Generative AI in Academic Writing

Your instructors want you to recognize how problematic it would be to ask AI to produce major written assignments and submit them as if you had written them. This includes academic summaries and essays in ESL 117 and research papers in future courses. Besides being unethical, the following are major issues with exclusive AI reliance. **Please read attentively:**

1. Lack of Authenticity and Truthfulness

Generative AI can produce information that seems factual but is often incorrect. In academic summaries, AI may not accurately capture the genuine main ideas from any article that you are to summarize. AI's production of inaccurate information is sometimes referred to as "*AI hallucinations*". Specifically, consider the following points:

1. **While Generative AI tools may appear to comprehend the content of a summary article, their understanding might not match that of a human mind.**
2. **Generative AI tools often rely on additional sources found on the internet to produce a "summary".** This can lead to inaccurate summaries, which violates the basic principle of objectivity and accuracy.
3. **Generative AI can easily fabricate false information, including artificial main ideas.**
4. **Many AI models generate outputs that are carefully crafted to seem convincing. However, the apparent "objectivity" of AI can be deceptive.** Similarly, a summarized article's list of main ideas may contain serious inaccuracies.

2. Lack of Critical Thinking and English Language Practice

If you use AI in ESL 117 assignments (and academic writing in general), essentially you will rely less on your own English skills. This limitation hinders your language acquisition and improvement. In other words, the more you practice your English and *make mistakes* (yes, making mistakes is useful in language learning), the more your English will improve.

AI tools cannot replicate human critical thinking. Here are concrete examples:

1. **Academic Summaries:** When creating an academic summary, AI may miss subtle nuances that authors use to express their viewpoints. These nuances are crucial for understanding an article's purpose or main ideas and should be included in summaries.
2. **Critical Analysis and Higher Order Thinking:** AI lacks the human skill of critical analysis, which is essential for developing and expressing arguments.

3. **Citation Conventions:** AI tools cannot apply specific citation conventions required for class assignments or other courses.

3. Ethical Considerations

When using AI in academic writing, ethical considerations are crucial. To ensure responsible and transparent practices in ESL 117, the following aspects require your utmost attention:

1. **Maintaining academic integrity is your ultimate responsibility at UW-Madison.** College students must uphold ethical norms, avoiding plagiarism and misrepresentation of information. You may be allowed to use AI but only in specific circumstances and under your instructor's supervision. In situations where you are allowed to use AI, do not blindly trust the information that is presented to you. Always make sure to check the accuracy of AI-generated content.
2. **In academic writing, human oversight and judgment play a crucial role.** Although AI provides valuable assistance, students should never depend solely on AI-generated content. Critical thinking, analysis, and decision-making remain essential throughout the research and academic writing process in college. ***AI tools should complement, rather than replace, human intellect and thoughts.***

The content on this PB page has been paraphrased from the websites below. Ideas have been blended to configure this information. For specific details, and to learn more about these topics, visit:

- [Strengths and weaknesses of Gen AI](#)
- [Understanding Artificial Intelligence](#)

16.

REPORTING VERBS

Using Reporting Verbs Effectively

Words like “says” and “discusses” are often overused when reporting information from sources. See the chart below for alternatives to these verbs.

Categories of Reporting Verbs				
Making a claim	Recommending	Disagreeing or Questioning	Showing	Expressing Agreement
argue		challenge	convey	agree
assert	call for	criticize	demonstrate	affirm
believe	demand	contradict	exemplify	call for
claim	encourage	deny	illustrate	endorse
emphasize	recommend	dispute	indicate	reaffirm
hypothesize	urge	question	propose	support
insist	warn	refute	point out	verify
maintain		reject	show	
suggest				

Be careful with the phrasing after your reporting verb.

Many reporting verbs can be followed by “**that:**”

- Experts **agree that** mobile devices can be distracting in the classroom.
- Gambino **claims that** ...
- X **concludes that** ...
- X **emphasizes that** ...
- X **implies that** ...

- X **maintains that** ...
- X **suggests that**
- X **states that** ...

How do you know if a reporting verb is followed by "that?"

Use a learner's dictionary, like the [Oxford Learners Dictionary](#), to see which words [collocate](#) with that verb.

However, some reporting verbs *cannot be followed* by **"that:"**

- discuss
- describe

Some reporting verbs *can* be followed by **"about:"**

- X **talks about** ...
- X **writes about** ...

However, some reporting verbs *cannot be followed* by

"about:"

- discuss
- describe

Some reporting verbs **collocate (go together)** with specific words:

- agrees **with**
- agrees or disagrees **with the idea that**
- asks **if/whether**
- argues **for**
- calls **for**
- challenges **the notion/idea that**
- disputes **the notion/idea that**
- disagrees **with**
- explains **how/why**
- focuses **on**

Tip: Use the [Skell Sketch Engine Corpus](#) to see examples of how reporting verbs can be used.

17.

RESPONDING TO WRITING

Preview Questions:

1. What does it mean to “respond” to writing?
2. When do we respond to writing? Why?
3. Can I use “I” or other personal pronouns in a response essay?
4. Can’t I just use AI to write my personal responses?

Responding to a Written Text

Response writing is an opportunity to engage with the text. As a reader, you should be reading actively, thinking about the information in the text. In this course, you will develop your understanding of the theme for Essay 1 by responding to one of the articles provided.

When writing a response assignment, your teacher is looking to hear “your voice.” An AI-generated response may lack your authentic voice. Write the first draft of your response on your own and use AI to refine it. BUT, be very careful of what information you share with ChatGPT since it does store all data you input. Many experts recommend avoiding inputting personal, confidential information.

Directions: Read the example and answer the questions below.

Selective Summary response example

Topic: Strategies that students at UW-Madison used for making connections

Selective Summary Response of “Madison Becomes Second Hometown for International Students”

In the article “Madison Becomes Second Hometown for International Students,” Xinlin Jiang (2023)

describes the experiences of several international students who attended UW-Madison and the factors that drew them to the university. More specifically, Jiang explains the strategies that three of the students used to make personal connections at the university. For example, Ruohan Yuan from China took advantage of an online platform to seek advice from alumni, and in the process, met a sophomore at the university who helped orient her to the city of Madison and some of the activities to do there. In another case that Jiang describes, Camille Liu from Peru found a sense of connection in university organizations and clubs, and also enjoyed attending campus sporting events—joining the thousands of other fans wearing the school colors on game day. Finally, Jiang introduces the reader to a student from Mexico, Eduardo Martinez Villegas, who developed a better connection with himself during the time he spent alone as an international student living in a city far from his home.

One idea from Jiang’s article that I would like to respond to is about getting involved with student organizations. Camille Liu, the vice president of the WISA says, “I feel a sense of belonging when I’m in WISA. I’ve met people there who feel like my family” (as cited in Jiang, 2023, p. 4). In other words, joining this organization has connected her with people who are as familiar as family members. This example resonated with me because I recently joined the Malaysian Student Association. Before I even left my home country, I was invited to join the Malaysian Undergraduate Student Organization of Madison, which allowed me to connect with other Malaysian students ahead of time and eased many of my worries about moving so far from home. Meeting people through the organization helped me arrive in Madison feeling supported and already part of a community. After reaching campus, joining the Malaysian Students’ Association at the University of Wisconsin strengthened that sense of belonging even more, giving me opportunities to form friendships through shared events, study sessions, and casual meetups at coffee shops or restaurants off campus. These connections have made my transition to life in Madison far smoother and have given me a network of friends who continue to shape my experience here.

Reference

Jiang, X. (2023). Madison becomes second hometown for international students. *UW–Madison News*. <https://news.wisc.edu/madison-becomes-second-hometown-for-international-students/>

EXERCISE #1: Analyze the selective summary response example

1. Look at the first two sentences of the summary. Has the writer included the required elements of a summary introduction?
2. Identify the overall thesis and narrowed scope.
3. Where does the response begin? What language signals the start of the response?
4. Does the writer properly introduce and cite the quotation?
5. What is the idea the reader responds to?
6. What techniques has the writer used to respond to the idea?
7. What information is included in the reference?
8. Identify all the transitions used in the summary response.

EXERCISE #2: Practice responding to ideas in an article

1. Look at the article you will respond to and identify one or two sentences you find interesting.
2. Paraphrase the sentences.
3. With a partner, read the original sentences and your paraphrase.
4. Discuss your reaction to the idea you have chosen.

18.

RESPONSE TECHNIQUES

Techniques for Responding to Texts

The goal of a response essay is to communicate to the reader your personal viewpoint, experience, or reaction to a text. A response has two parts: First, tell the reader what important idea from a text you want to respond to. Next, convey your reflections on the idea through one of the techniques below.

Characteristics of a response

1. A response begins with an **idea** that is interesting to you or you feel is important.
2. A response is **subjective**, expressing your opinion or perspective.
3. A response uses one or more of the techniques below:
 1. **Personal experience** – Write about something you experienced (or someone you know) that relates to an idea in the article.
 2. **Agree or disagree** – Identify a point you agree or disagree with and explain why.
 3. **Application** – Identify an idea or information in the article and apply it to something you have seen or heard before. You might compare something in the article to something you previously learned or analyze an idea in the article based on information you already know.

Three techniques for writing a response

When writing response, read the article and imagine you are talking to the writer. What questions might you ask? What comments might you make? How might you relate to the ideas in the article? Take notes in the margins as you read. You can use these notes later as you write your response.

The following examples respond to ideas from Megan Gambino’s (2011) article “How Technology Makes Us Better Social Beings.”

Example 1: Personal experience response

One issue from the article that I'd like to discuss is the positive effect of using social websites. ****Keith Hampton, a sociologist of the University of Pennsylvania** says, "People who use sites like Facebook actually have more close relationships and are more likely to be involved in civic and political activities" (as cited in Gambino, 2011, p. 40). The author's point is that after using social networking, people care more about the political events and the relationship between each other is also better. In fact, the Internet and SNS have made us, as active citizens and "social beings" as Gambino says, more connected and united than ever before. I agree with his sentiment and can illustrate it with a personal example. When I first left my country to come to the United States to pursue my university degree, it was the first time ever in my life to be so far away from home to study without knowing anyone in a place. Fortunately, I got an invitation from Malaysian Undergraduate Student Organization of Madison to join their group on Facebook before I left my country. As a result, meeting other Malaysian students in Madison before I arrived, I felt much better prepared and more confident in my journey to next the part of my life. Even now, I use SNS to make new friends and stay in contact with my high school best buddies every day. Although I do not go out to bars or parties to meet new friends and I am miles apart from my high school besties, I am still able to interact and socialize with them as a result of technology and SNS.

EXERCISE #1:

1. Identify the issue/idea this response will focus on.
2. Identify the quotation.
3. Identify the paraphrase and the words that introduce the paraphrase.
4. How does the writer share their personal experience and relate it to the article? Identify an interesting detail the writer uses in the response.

Example 2: Agree/disagree response

Another idea I'd like to respond to focuses on how people rely on the Internet. Gambino (2011) states,

“About 25% of those observed using the Internet in public spaces said that they had not visited the space before they could access the Internet there” (p. 41). In other words, people already take Internet as an important part in their life and expect to access it wherever they go. I strongly agree with this argument. For example, I am taking six courses this semester, and three-quarters of my homework and readings are posted online. If the Internet is inaccessible in my resident hall, I will definitely consider moving out. Moreover, I only visit buildings on campus where the wifi signal is strong. Most of the libraries are good for this, but I found the connectivity in Van Vleck Math Building is not so good, so I don’t go there anymore. I am not a geology major, but my friend told me the wifi in the geology library is really fast, so now I study there in the afternoons. In short, I definitely feel that accessibility to the Internet heavily influences whether or not people will use a public space.

EXERCISE #2

1. Identify the issue/idea this response will focus on.
2. Identify the quotation.
3. Identify the paraphrase and the words that introduce the paraphrase.
4. How does the writer share their personal opinion and relate it to the article? Identify an interesting detail the writer uses in the response.

Example 3: Application response

One important topic that I’d like to address is how people use technology in public areas. Keith Hampton, a sociologist of the University of Pennsylvania said, “Laptop users are not alone in the true sense because they are interacting with very diverse people through social networking websites, e-mail, video conferencing, Skype, instant message and a multitude of other ways” (as cited in Gambino, 2011, p. 40). This means that people who use mobile technology in public areas in fact communicate and share information with people through social networking sites, video, e-mail and many other media, and hence they are not isolated. This reminds me of why Mark Zuckerberg wanted to create Facebook. He originally created it to build connections among students at Harvard University, but it has grown to become a way to bring people together from anywhere in the world. By 2006, it became accessible beyond universities to anyone with an email address (Phillips, 2007, p. 1). What he initially thought would be just limited to one school has become a way for people around the world to connect with each other, and now most people seem to use it on their

mobile devices at any time or in any place. Through Facebook, and other social networking sites, people do not have to feel alone any more, even if they are sitting alone in a Starbucks drinking a coffee.

EXERCISE #3:

1. Identify the issue/idea this response will focus on.
2. Identify the quotation.
3. Identify the paraphrase and the words that introduce the paraphrase.
4. How is the application example different from the previous examples? Identify an interesting detail the writer uses in the response.

19.

PARTIAL QUOTES

Why Use Partial Quotes?

Sometimes an author may use a single word or phrase in a sentence in a way that is unique or creative and thus difficult to paraphrase. In this situation, using a *partial quotation (or partial quote)* is probably more appropriate than directly quoting the entire sentence.

Partial quotations a good option when you only want to include only a few specific exact words from a text. This allows you to integrate and utilize important words or short phrases from another author's text without using an excessive amount of direct quotations in your writing. Like any other time you use another writer's words or ideas, you must provide a proper citation.

Here is an example of a partial quote taken from an article written by Fischer:

Original sentence:

On some campuses, many students come from the same set of internationally focused high schools in Beijing and Shanghai and import their cliques and social networks (Fischer, 2011, p. 15).

Partial quote:

Some students from the same international high schools in large Chinese cities will “import their cliques” with them when they come to U.S. universities (Fischer, 2011, p. 15).

20.

COMBINING A SUMMARY AND RESPONSE

Writing a Summary Response Assignment

One way to explore a topic is to read and respond to an article. Such an assignment typically begins with a summary of the article followed by a response to idea(s) in the article. The format of a summary response assignment can vary depending on the course and instructor, but it is a common type of academic assignment.

Three steps in a summary-response assignment:

1. Begin with a summary of the article. This will familiarize the audience with the context of your response.
2. Include an introduction to the response. Identify an idea by quoting the idea and then paraphrasing the idea.
3. Explain your response to the idea. Through one or more of the response techniques, explain your reaction to the idea.

Format for introducing a response: Quote + paraphrase + response

Look at the beginning of the response below. Notice the required components:

- Citation (author's name and page number)
- Date
- Quotation
- Paraphrase of the quote
- The start to the response

Example: Gambino (2011) writes, “The thoughtful and critical use of social networks enables users to engage in current political or other civic actions through an online format” (p. 1). Gambino suggests that those who use social networks thoughtfully may be able to participate in political activities simply by being online. This idea reminds me of when...

Notice that the example follows this format:

- Last name (date) writes, “Exact quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). I find this **topic / idea / concept / example** interesting because...

Stems for introducing a selective summary

The sentence stems below can help you develop your command of more complex academic language.

- In “article title” author’s first name and last name (year) examines /discusses /claims.... main idea.

Stems for narrowing the scope in a selective summary

- In particular, Gambino _____.
- More specifically, Gambino _____.
- Gambino focuses on _____.
- In their discussion / analysis / etc., Gambino _____.

Stems to begin your response

- Last name (date) writes, “Exact quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). I find this **topic/idea/concept/example** interesting because...
- The *first* **topic** I’d like to discuss is ... (identify the topic). Last name (date) states, “Exact quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). I was surprised with this finding....
- One *important* **idea** concerns ... (identify the idea). Last name (date) indicates, “Exact quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). In my experience...
- Another *critical* **issue** I’d like to address is ... (identify the issue). Last name (date) points out, “Exact

quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). This reminds me of when...

- (Identify the topic) ... is very interesting to me. Last name (date) suggests, “Exact quote here” (p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). This example can be compared to...

Note: *you do NOT need to include the title in the beginning of your response because you already included the title in the summary section.*

Stem **for an indirect source:**

- **Some people argue** that ... (identify the idea). X (name plus credential) said, “Exact quote here” (as cited in Name, year, p. X). In other words, ... (paraphrase of this idea). I agree with them to some extent, but...

Example: Some experts point out the problems of social networking sites. Stanford University Professor Jean Anderson claims, “These sites tend to (full quote here) ...” (as cited in Cook, 2019, p. 6). Anderson means here that...paraphrase.... I agree with Anderson to some extent, but.... (response).

Stems **to introduce a paraphrase:**

- What Anderson means is...
- Anderson means that...
- This means that...
- That is to say, ...
- Anderson’s point is that...
- What s/he/they is/are suggesting/implies/saying is that...
- What Anderson wants to express is...

Stems **to show agreement:**

- I totally/completely agree with X about/that...
- I agree with X about...
- I find X’s perspective on to be quite compelling.
- I sympathize with the author’s point about...

Stems **to show concession:**

- I agree with X about ... to some extent, but...
- While I agree with X to some extent...

- I am not entirely in agreement with X about/that...
- My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position on, but I find Y's argument about... to be equally persuasive.

Stems **to show disagreement:**

- I disagree with X's point that...
- I strongly disagree with X about...
- I disagree with X's claim that.... because...
- I disagree with X's view that... because, as recent research has shown...
- I find it surprising that I just can't believe that.....

Stems **to introduce examples, personal experience, and comparisons:**

- This example makes me think about...
- Based on my experience, ...
- This reminds me of...
- This makes me think of...

Vocabulary alternatives:

1. For **topic**: idea, concept, example, issue, problem, challenge, obstacle...
2. For **adjectives** to modify the topic: important, significant, critical, interesting, first, second, next, another

PART IV

UNIT 4: FUNDAMENTALS OF ACADEMIC ESSAY WRITING

In this Unit

- Understanding essay organization
- Creating a research question
- Writing a thesis statement
- Developing a detailed outline
- Introduction to evidence integration

21.

EXPLORING THE ESSAY

Parts of an Essay

An essay typically has three basic parts, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

Student Model for Essay 1

The essay below is an authentic student essay. This essay was chosen as a model because it effectively demonstrates the characteristics of academic writing and has an important message for the reader.

Student name

ESL 117

Essay #1, Draft #3

The Value of Peer Review in Improving Students' Writing

The process of writing academic papers involves many steps: exploring a topic through reading and writing, narrowing a topic, organizing the ideas, writing multiple drafts, getting feedback and making revisions. Over multiple drafts, the writer refines his/her ideas in part by getting feedback from readers. In a classroom, the teacher and the classmates, or peers, can serve as easily accessible readers. Peer feedback, also called peer review or peer response, is widely used in writing classes for both native speakers and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Peer review benefits both the writer and the reviewer, and it can be just as useful as teacher feedback.

Peer review is used in ESL classes to improve student's English writing or get better grades on writing assignments. Many ESL programs involve international students in peer review to improve their writing skills, and many studies support the idea that peer review is essential to improve students' writing skills. Bijami, Kashef and Nejad (2013) state that critical and specific peer comments can be utilized to enhance students' writing skills and help students become competent writers (p.93). Peer comments can address specific aspects of

writing. For example, peer comments help students improve their writing ability in terms of organization and content (Zeqiri, 2012, p. 50). Moreover, helping the writer identify the strengths and weaknesses in their writing helps the writer develop self-awareness. According to Tsui and Ng (2000), it is often difficult for students to see their own weaknesses, but peers can point out these problems (p. 166). These examples illustrate how ESL students' writing skills can be enhanced through peer review because it helps them improve awareness of their papers' strengths and weaknesses.

Not only does peer review benefit the writer, identifying strengths and weaknesses in another student's writing plays an important role in improving the reviewer's own writing ability. An important writing skill is to be able to recognize good writing by critically evaluating writing. By reading their classmates' papers critically, students learn more about what makes writing successful and effective (Bijami et al., 2013, p. 94). In this way, reading other's papers and being given criteria to look for allows students have a chance to develop these skills.

Furthermore, peer review seems to have some unexpected benefits for the reviewer. There are some studies that show that students who review peers' papers are more likely to improve their writing ability than students who receive peers' comments. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) conducted a study which compared the improvements in writing between givers and receivers of peer feedback and found that of the two groups, the giver group made more progress in writing than the receiver group (p. 32). This finding shows the givers (or reviewers) learned to judge their own work self-critically by evaluating their peers' writing and transferring this knowledge to their own writing, resulting in significant improvements on their own papers. Thus, responding to a peer's paper is an important way for a student to improve his/her own writing.

There are additional advantages of peer review for both the writer and the reviewer in terms of language skills, classroom environment, and confidence. Peer review not only helps students improve their writing skills but also helps them develop language skills. Language skills are developed through interaction and communication. Lundstrom and Baker (2009) write that peer review enhances not only students' writing skills but also students' speaking and listening skills (p. 31). Such research suggests that peer review can improve ESL students' oral skills because they are involved in meaningful discussion and negotiations. Furthermore, peer review creates a student-centered classroom environment where students work together. Peer review encourages collaborative learning, in which students learn from and support each other (Tsui & Ng, 2000, p. 167). This collaborative group work helps to form a community of learners. In addition, peer review can increase a student's interest and confidence in writing. Rather than relying on the teacher, the student is actively involved in the writing process (Bijami et al., 2013, p. 94). Such emphasis on learning independently further demonstrates the claim that as students take more responsibility for their writing, from developing their topic to writing drafts, they become more confident and inspired.

Although many students tend to prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback, there is evidence that peer review can be as helpful and meaningful as teacher feedback. In fact, recent studies reveal that there is no significant difference between teacher feedback and peer feedback in terms of improvement in students' writing skills.

In their study, Ruegg (2015) found that even though students who received teacher comments showed better performance on grammar than students who received peer comments, there was little difference between teacher comments and peer comments with regard to students' improvements in areas such as organization, content, vocabulary, academic style and final grades (pp. 79-80). That is, peer feedback can be as effective as teacher feedback in revising students' compositions and covers a wide range of writing skills. Based on their research which compared students who received peer comments to students who received teacher comments, Eksi's findings (2012) also support Ruegg's point that peer feedback enabled students to make significant writing improvements (p. 43). In sum, both teacher feedback and peer feedback helped students improve the quality of their writing.

In addition, teacher feedback and peer feedback can complement each other. To demonstrate this, Tsui and Ng (2000) cite a study in which 90% of the ESL students gave peer feedback that was judged to be valid by the teacher, and 60% of the students gave appropriate advice on aspects that had not been pointed out by the teacher (p. 149). These results mean that the vast majority of the student feedback was useful and accurate, and the students got additional feedback from peers that they would not have had if only the teacher had read the paper. Thus, peer feedback can expand the amount of useful feedback that the writer receives.

Many studies have shown the advantages of peer review such as improving students' writing ability and language skills, developing students' critical thinking skills and creating a student-centered classroom environment. That peer review is a time-consuming activity for both writing teachers and students is an undeniable fact, and students who are inexperienced in peer review will need training and guidance. Nevertheless, this investment in time and training gives students a powerful way to improve not only their writing skills, but also their abilities as thinkers and problem-solvers.

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22.

CREATING A RESEARCH QUESTION

Introduction to Research Questions

A **research question (RQ)** helps guide your research. It tells you **what you are studying** and **what kind of information to look for**. As you read your sources and review your notes, always look for **answers to your research question**.

Parts of a Research Question

A research question has **two main parts**:

1. **The topic**
 1. This is **what your research is about**.
 2. It is usually a **noun or noun phrase**.
2. **The focus**
 1. This shows what you **want to say about the topic**.
 2. The focus helps you know **what type of information to look for** as you read.

Example Research Question

- Why do people become addicted to social media?

In the example above:

- **Topic:** addiction to social media
- **Focus:** reasons *why* people become addicted (the **causes**)

If this were your research question, you would read your sources and notes to find **reasons people become addicted to social media**.

EXERCISE

Types of focus



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=150#h5p-3>

Adapted from: Dollahite, N.E. & Huan, J. (2012). *SourceWork: Academic Writing for Success*.

YOUR TURN

For each research question, identify the following:

1. The topic
2. The type of focus
3. The information to look for

Example #1: How much do test preparation courses impact students' TOEFL and IELTS scores?

Example #2: Should the age to get a driver's license be raised from 16 to 18?

Example #3: How do the university school systems in the United States and South Korea compare with each other?

Research Questions with More than One Focus

Some research questions have **more than one focus**.

Example Research Question with More than One Focus

- In what ways can understanding the causes of smart phone addiction help a person to stop using it compulsively?

In the example above, the research question has two focuses:

1. The causes of smart phone addiction (cause)
2. The methods for stopping them (process)

When a research question has more than one focus, you need to look for **different kinds of information** in your sources.

Generative AI Tools for Writing a Research Question

Web-based tools can support academic reading and writing **when used responsibly**.

You may use generative AI to help you **develop and refine a research question** for your argumentative essay.

AI can support your work by:

- Helping you **narrow a broad topic** into a focused question
- Suggesting **possible angles or issues** related to your topic
- Helping you check if a research question is **too broad or too simple**
- Showing examples of **argumentative research questions**

Example Prompts

- How can I narrow this topic into a research question: *[topic]*?
- Is this research question too broad or too narrow? Why?
- Give me an example of an argumentative research question about *[topic]*.
- How can I revise this question to make it more focused? *[paste question]*

Use these suggestions to **guide your thinking**, not to copy directly.

What AI Should NOT Do

-  Choose your research question for you
-  Write your thesis or essay
-  Replace thinking about your topic and sources
-  Be trusted without instructor or source confirmation

⚠ **Important:** AI may suggest questions that do not fit your assignment or course goals. Always **check your research question with your instructor, assignment guidelines, and course materials** before using it in your essay.

Key Takeaways

- A research question helps **guide your reading and research**.
- Every research question has a **topic** and a **focus**.
- The focus tells you **what type of information to look for** in your sources.
- Some research questions have **more than one focus**, so you look for different kinds of information.
- Understanding your research question helps you **take better notes and organize ideas**.

Source consulted

Adapted from: Dollahite, N. E., & Huan, J. (2012). *SourceWork: Academic Writing for Success*

23.

CREATING A ROUGH OUTLINE

Preview Questions:

1. What is a rough outline? What information does a rough outline include?
2. What is the purpose of writing a rough outline? How might it be helpful for you?

Introduction to Rough Outlines

You have been reading and taking notes, developing a broad understanding of the topic. You should have some sense of how to answer your research question. As you read, identify the “answers” (evidence) to your research question. Create a rough outline to organize your ideas.

A **rough outline** is an early plan for your essay. It is not final. It helps you organize your ideas before you start writing paragraphs.

A rough outline usually includes:

- your research question (RQ)
- the focus of your research question (for example: cause, effect, comparison)
- the main answers to your research question, expressed as a short list, grouped into categories

Think of a rough outline as a map. It shows where your essay is going, but you can change it later.

Example Rough Outline

Research Question: Why do people become addicted to social media?

- Focus of RQ: Causes
- Answers to RQ:
 - Social validation
 - Fear of missing out (FOMO)

Technique for creating a rough outline: Brainstorming a list

1. Review your **reading notes and highlighted ideas** in your articles.
2. Write your **research question** at the top of your page.
3. Brainstorm **a list of 10-15 words or phrases that answer** your research question.
4. Group similar ideas. Look at your list and identify **ideas that seem to go together**. Label groups of words with a different number. (In the example below there are four categories, so each answer has been labeled 1, 2, 3, or 4.) Each number corresponds to a category.
5. Name your **categories**. Choose a short phrase to describe each group.
6. Put your outline away. Look at it later with **fresh eyes**. Is there anything you would like to change or add?

Note: You will continue to refine this rough outline. It will help you write your thesis statement and your detailed outline, and it is likely to change as you explore your topic.

Example: Process for Creating a Rough Outline

Step 1: Choose a Research Question: What makes a good university?

Step 2: Focus type(s) – choose one or more.

- cause
- effect
- comparison
- **definition**
- **classification**

- process
- argument
- problem and solution

Step 3: After reading your sources, do a focused, in-depth reading to find evidence that answers your research question, and make a list of 10–15 phrases that directly address it.

- libraries with print and digital collections **1**
- computer labs and tech support **3**
- small class sizes **2**
- luxury dorms **1**
- exercise facilities **1**
- lots of choices for classes **2**
- diverse student population **4**
- many different types of clubs and organizations **4**
- professors with good degrees **2**
- modern research lab facilities **1 and/or 2**
- ability to access course info on phones **3**
- top ranking business program **2**
- high quality ESL program **2**
- course management system (Canvas) **3**
- opportunities for internships **4**
- volunteering opportunities **4**
- good cafeterias **1**
- study abroad programs **2 and/or 4**

Step 4: Categorize: Analyze the list and group similar ideas together into **categories**. Put numbers next to each item designating its category.

Step 5: Then identify a **word or phrase** to describe each category. List the categories as 3-4 supporting points in a **rough outline**:

- Category 1 – modern campus facilities
- Category 2 – high quality instruction
- Category 3 – technological support for student learning
- Category 4 – opportunities for student growth and development

Step 6: Write a tentative **thesis statement**. Limit your supporting points to the three most important (for a 5-paragraph essay) or the two most important (for a 4-paragraph essay).

An attractive university typically offers high quality instruction, technological support, and opportunities for student growth and development.

or

An attractive university typically offers high quality instruction and opportunities for student growth and development.

Key Takeaways

- A rough outline is a **first plan** for your essay, not a final version.
- It includes your **research question**, the **focus type**, and **main answer categories**.
- Writing a rough outline helps you **organize ideas** and see how your evidence fits together.
- You create a rough outline by **reviewing sources**, brainstorming ideas, and **grouping similar points**.
- The categories from your rough outline later become **body paragraphs**.
- A rough outline helps you write a **thesis statement**.
- It is normal for a rough outline to **change** as you read more and think more about your topic.

24.

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

Preview Questions:

1. What is a thesis statement? How does a thesis statement help you when writing an essay?
2. What are some characteristics of a good thesis statement?
3. What are some common problems with thesis statements?
4. Is it OK to change your thesis statement as you develop your essay?

Introduction to Thesis Statements

A **thesis statement** is usually one sentence long (though you may see longer thesis statements in ESL 118). Think of a thesis statement as a type of “map” which tells the reader where your essay will “go” and what the reader can expect.

Important note on Generative AI and Thesis Statements

Generative AI typically creates thesis statements that look like this:

DON'T do this:

***This essay will explore** three reasons U.S. colleges have worked to support international students and **will discuss** the guidance provided to help students adjust to new academic culture expectations.*

In ESL 117 and 118 (and in academic writing in general), avoid using language like, “This essay will explore...” or “This essay will discuss.” Instead, follow the guidance below.

DO this instead:

Universities in the U.S. have worked to support international students by giving orientation sessions that help promote student success in a new academic culture as well as courses on American culture that help students feel more comfortable in their new environment.

Characteristics of an effective thesis statement

1. It includes the topic and focus. The thesis statement answers your research question.
2. It includes an overview of your supporting points. These points are logically connected to your focus.
3. It is not too long or too short; it provides sufficient information.
4. A good thesis statement is written in formal, academic style, with appropriate and correct vocabulary and grammar. A good thesis statement is clear.
5. Avoids using language like “This essay will discuss...”.

1 Topic and Focus

The thesis statement is a concise answer to your Research Question. It states the topic of your essay and expresses the focus.

Example:

- topic: social media addiction
- focus: why young people become addicted (causes)
- thesis: Young people become addicted to social media because their brain chemistry puts them at risk for addiction, they need personal validation, and they are afraid of being left out.

2 Overview of Supporting Points

Your thesis statement should include a list of your supporting points. This overview shows the reader what you will write about and how those ideas will be organized. The example below illustrates the relationship between the [rough outline](#), supporting points, and thesis statement.

Example:

- research question: What are the effects of smart phone addiction?
- focus: Effects
- answers to RQ:
 - Back and neck pain
 - Shorter attention span
 - Damage to eyesight from blue light
 - Disrupted sleep
 - Source of anxiety and stress
- thesis statement: Smart phone addiction can lead to an increase in anxiety and stress, a decrease in attention span, and physical problems like back and neck pain.

Notice that the writer did not use all five “answers” to their research question, but instead selected the three *most important* points. In addition, the writer has ordered the points so that there is a logical flow from what the reader perceives to be the most important point to less important point.

3 Provides sufficient information

Express the supporting points as single words or short phrases, but avoid expressing the supporting points as full sentences.

Thesis Statement	Analysis
✗ International students face many challenges.	Missing supporting points.
✓ The most critical challenges that international students face include culture shock and language barriers, consequently leading to stress.	Acceptable
✓ To this extent, the most critical challenges that international students face include experiencing culture shock in and out of the classroom and overcoming language barriers in their daily life, consequently leading to stress and anxiety.	Acceptable
✗ To this extent, the most critical challenges that international students face include experiencing culture shock in and out of the classroom, blocking their academic achievement, along with encountering language barriers in their daily life, and having to deal with the mental and physical effects of increased stress and anxiety as a result of all of these problems.	Contains too much information

4 Uses academic style

In academic writing, a thesis statement is expressed using formal, academic writing style. Refer to [Writing Academic Tips](#) as a reminder of what this means.

Example thesis statement	Evaluation
✗ In a nutshell, I'm going to explain three ways U.S. colleges have tried to make international students feel more comfortable, like having peer advising things, giving them lots of academic resources, and helping them figure out new expectations.	Informal language; appropriate for speaking (e.g. giving presentations).
✗ Therefore, in the following essay, I will outline three reasons U.S. colleges have strived to accommodate international students: they include offering professional and peer advising and mentoring, providing ample academic and activity resources, and helping students meet new academic culture expectations.	Formal language, but avoid using "I" in assignments for this course; may be appropriate for assignments in other courses.
✗ This essay will describe three ways U.S. colleges have strived to accommodate international students and discuss how students leverage resources.	Formal language, but avoid using "This essay will..." expressions.
✓ Therefore, U.S. colleges have strived to accommodate international students by offering professional and peer advising and mentoring, providing ample academic and activity resources, and helping students meet new academic culture expectations.	Appropriate for assignments in this course.

5 Uses precise vocabulary

An effective thesis statement will use accurate, appropriate vocabulary. Choose the correct vocabulary to

express your focus by consulting a dictionary and thesaurus. Use a corpus for checking **collocations** (like [Skell Sketch Engine](#)).

6 Supporting points are grammatically parallel

The supporting points should be grammatically parallel. This means each point should be expressed using the same grammatical structure. See the examples below:

1. Parallelism with Noun Phrases

Example: An effective Academic ESL Program is based on three components: **qualified instructors, an appropriate curriculum, and support from the university.**

2. Parallelism with *-ing* Verb Phrases

Example: To develop a successful STEM program, a university must undergo strict regulations beginning with **formulating program goals, developing courses, and hiring faculty.**

3. Parallelism with Short Clauses

Example: The use of laptops should be allowed in the classroom because they **facilitate faster note-taking, promote better organization of information, and provide access to supplemental information.**

7 Should express a logical relationship among points whenever possible

When there are connections between points, determine the type of relationship between your points (e.g. cause-effect, sequence). Then include language to demonstrate the connections to your reader.

1. Cause → Effect

Thesis Statement: *International students often struggle with academic performance because cultural differ-*

ences, limited language proficiency, and unfamiliar classroom expectations create additional stress and confusion.

→ Shows multiple **causes leading to one effect**.

2. Effect → Cause

Thesis Statement: *The rising demand for online degree programs is largely the result of increasing job-market competition, higher tuition costs, and the need for flexible learning schedules.*

→ Starts with the **effect**, then explains the **causes**.

3. Problem → Solution

Thesis Statement: *To address declining student engagement, universities should integrate interactive digital tools, increase opportunities for collaborative learning, and provide more timely academic support.*

→ Identifies a **problem** and offers **solutions**.

4. Comparison / Contrast with Reasoning

Thesis Statement: *While face-to-face courses offer immediate feedback and stronger classroom community, online courses provide greater scheduling flexibility and more individualized pacing.*

→ Shows differences and evaluates strengths of each option.

5. Multi-Part (Process + Effect)

Thesis Statement: *By combining real-time instruction with self-paced activities, universities can create a more flexible and accessible learning environment that improves student satisfaction and performance.*

→ Explains a method and the positive result.

6. Cause–Effect + Argument

Thesis Statement: *Universities should blend synchronous and asynchronous learning formats to maximize flexibility, support diverse learning preferences, and ultimately improve overall course outcomes.*

→ “To maximize...” shows purpose and opinion; “Ultimately improve...” shows effect

Problems with thesis statements

Keep the criteria above in mind to avoid these problems:

- A lack of focus
- A lack of supporting points

- Supporting points are not logically connected to the focus
- Contains too much information
- Use inappropriate, imprecise, or ungrammatical language
- Supporting points are not expressed using parallel (similar) grammar

Key Takeaways

- A thesis statement is **one clear sentence** that shows the main idea of your essay.
- A good thesis **answers the research question** and includes the **topic and focus**.
- It gives a **brief list of main points** you will explain in the essay.
- Thesis statements use **formal academic language** and avoid phrases like “*This essay will discuss...*”.
- Supporting points should be **clear, parallel, and logically connected**.
- It is **okay to change your thesis** as your ideas develop.

25.

SELECTING EVIDENCE

Preview Questions:

1. What types of evidence can you use in your essay?
2. What are the criteria for determining if a piece of evidence is appropriate to use in your essay?
3. Why should you strive to use a variety of types of evidence?

Selecting Appropriate Evidence

Your next step is to locate evidence to support your claims.

Criteria for selecting effective evidence

1. You must be able to understand and explain the evidence easily and clearly.
2. The evidence should be directly related to your supporting points; it must support your thesis.
3. A variety of types of evidence can make your writing more credible.

Easy to understand

If you find an article, but cannot understand the information in the article, it will be difficult or even impossible to use the evidence. You must therefore make sure you can understand the information you want to use so you can paraphrase it clearly. Since most of the evidence you use will be paraphrased (not quoted), it is essential that you select information that you can easily express in your own words.

Supports your thesis statement

The evidence must be directly related to your topic and thesis statement. If it is not related to your thesis, it could lead to problems with logic or cause confusion. (On the other hand, if you are finding evidence that does not support your thesis statement, you could consider changing your thesis based on the information you are reading.)

Types of evidence

Using various types of evidence will show your reader you are familiar with the topic. There are two general categories of evidence, documented and undocumented.

Documented

Documented evidence is information for which the writer provides a source (and includes a citation). Documented evidence has therefore, been “documented” or “written down” previously and recorded for the public.

Types of documented evidence may include facts, statistics, expert opinions, examples, or anecdotes that the reader can locate in the original publication based on the citation and reference.

Examples:

- Nearly 98% of UW students bring a laptop or other device to class (Pierce, 2013, p. 1).
- The UW-Madison will offer free tuition to transfer students who are the first in their families to attend college (Savidge, 2017, p. 1).

- **Note:** If you are writing an essay about social media use among college students, it would be fairly easy to look at the percent (the number of) students who have Facebook or Instagram accounts. You could include these numbers, along with a citation and reference, in your essay as documented evidence.

Undocumented

Undocumented evidence may include general knowledge that most people accept to be true. What constitutes such shared knowledge may differ depending on the audience, but a good way to think about this is to ask yourself whether or not it is likely that most people will know what you are writing about without having to look up the information.

Examples:

- Teenagers feel pressure to fit in with those around them.
- In the United States, cars drive on the right side of the road.

- **Note:** It is also possible that some facts can be undocumented.
 - It is a simple fact that the earth travels around the sun; we all know and accept this as a truth, and it's unnecessary to include a citation.
 - Now imagine you are writing an essay about college students and social media. It may be **common knowledge** that having a social media account is typical for most college students. Therefore, it may be possible in your essay to assert that most college students have some type of social media account, and this assertion could be considered undocumented evidence, which means you would not need to include a citation.
 - However, such an assertion could further be supplemented (and strengthened) with documented evidence such as which particular accounts are most common and what percent of students have them. In this way, documented and undocumented evidence can work together.
- Another rough guideline is that if you can easily locate the information in five sources, it might be considered undocumented. Check with your instructor if you are unsure whether evidence is undocumented.

Types of evidence: Support your writing with a variety of evidence

Look at the types of evidence below and their examples. Which are most appropriate for academic writing?

1. **Fact** – A study conducted last year shows a link between eating animal products and an increase in

lifestyle diseases, such as type two diabetes.

2. **Statistic** – Forty-eight percent of all UW students bring both a laptop computer and a tablet to class.
3. **Expert opinion** – Linguist Steven Pinker believes people who are bilingual experience culture differently than monolingual speakers.
4. **Example** – Many online and technical companies are allowing their employees to telecommute, or work from home. Apple’s customer service employees, for example, can work remotely.
5. **Personal experience** – I prepared for my chemistry test by meeting with a study group every week, and it really helped me a lot. My weekly quiz scores improved.
6. **Undocumented evidence** – Most first year students live in the dorms and then move off campus when they are sophomores or juniors.

Generative AI Tools for Selecting Appropriate Evidence

Web-based tools can support academic reading and writing **when used responsibly**.

You may use generative AI to help you **select and understand evidence** that supports your thesis and supporting points.

AI can support your work by:

- Helping you decide whether a piece of evidence is **relevant** to your thesis
- Explaining **complex information** in simpler language so you can understand it
- Helping you identify **types of evidence** (fact, statistic, expert opinion, example)
- Helping you check whether evidence is **documented or undocumented**

Example Prompts

- Does this evidence clearly support my thesis? Why or why not?
- Is this example a fact, statistic, or expert opinion?
- Can you explain this evidence in simpler language? *[paste sentence]*
- Would this evidence need a citation, or is it general knowledge?

Use AI to **understand and evaluate evidence**, not to replace your reading.

What AI Should NOT Do

- ❌ Choose evidence for you without you reading the source
- ❌ Paraphrase evidence for you to copy
- ❌ Replace reading full articles or sources
- ❌ Be trusted without checking the original source

⚠ **Important:** AI may misunderstand sources or oversimplify information. Always **read the original article**, confirm facts, and make sure evidence is accurate, relevant, and properly cited before using it in your essay.

Key Takeaways

- Strive to use **documented evidence** in your essay.
- If you are **unsure** whether evidence is documented or undocumented, **ask your instructor**.
- Use a **variety of types of evidence** and perspectives to make your essay more credible.

Knowledge Check: Revisit this exercise on Common Knowledge



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=160#b5p-10>

26.

WRITING A DETAILED OUTLINE

Preview Questions:

1. How is a detailed outline different from a rough outline?
2. What information should be included in a detailed outline?
3. Why are detailed outlines important? How can they help you as a writer?
4. What are some possible formats of detailed outlines? Which format do you typically use?

Introduction to Detailed Outlines

A **detailed outline** helps you plan your essay **before** you write your first draft. A detailed outline works like a **guide or plan** for writing your essay. It helps you see:

- what each paragraph will be about
- what evidence you will use
- how your ideas are organized

What does a detailed outline include?

A detailed outline usually includes:

- your **research question**
- your **thesis statement**
- **topic sentences** for each body paragraph
- **evidence** (quotes or paraphrases) for each supporting point
- **citations** to show where each piece of evidence comes from

What are detailed outlines important?

A detailed outline is a tool for organizing ideas. A detailed outline helps you:

- stay **focused** on your main ideas
- organize your ideas **clearly and logically**
- see if you have **enough evidence**
- write your draft **faster and with less stress**

You can **change your detailed outline** while writing. For example, you may change the order of ideas, add new information, or remove weak or unnecessary points.

Common Outline Formats

Example 1: An alphanumeric outline

One common format is the alphanumeric outline. This type of outline is easy to create using the Outline feature in Microsoft Word or Google Docs.

Research Question:

I. Introduction:

- A. Opening statements (to engage the reader and introduce the topic)
- B. Thesis statement

II. First supporting point (topic sentence)

- A. Evidence 1 (with citation)
- B. Evidence 2 (with citation)
- C. Evidence 3 (with citation)

III. Second supporting point (topic sentence)

- A. Evidence 1 (with citation)

B. Evidence 2 (with citation)

C. Evidence 3 (with citation)

IV. Conclusion

A. Reminders/Summary of main ideas

B. Final analysis or interpretation of main point

C. Ending comment (opinion, prediction, recommendation, etc.)

Other Acceptable Formats

It does not matter whether you use numbers, letters, bullets, or other symbols; what is important is that you use a reasonable, clear visual method to represent your overall organization and hierarchy of main ideas and supporting ideas.

Here are additional examples, which accomplish the same goal as the outline above:

Example 2

Research question:

Introduction:

Opening statements (introduce the topic):

Thesis statement:

Body Paragraph 1 (Supporting Point):

Topic sentence:

Evidence 1 (paraphrase with citation):

Evidence 2 (paraphrase with citation):

Evidence 3 (paraphrase with citation):

Body Paragraph 2 (Supporting Point):

Topic sentence:

Evidence 1 (paraphrase with citation):

Evidence 2 (paraphrase with citation):

Evidence 3 (paraphrase with citation):

Conclusion:

Final analysis or interpretation:

Ending comment (opinion, prediction, or recommendation):

Example 3

Research question:

- Introduction:
 - Opening statements (to engage the reader and introduce the topic):
 - Thesis statement:
- (Body) First supporting point (topic sentence):
 - Evidence 1: Paraphrase (with citation):
 - Evidence 2: Paraphrase (with citation):
 - Evidence 3: Paraphrase (with citation):
- (Body) Second supporting point (topic sentence):
 - Evidence 1: Paraphrase (with citation):
 - Evidence 2: Paraphrase (with citation):
 - Evidence 3: Paraphrase (with citation):
- Conclusion:
 - Final analysis or interpretation of main point:
 - Ending comment (an opinion, a prediction, a recommendation, etc):

Key Takeaways

- A **rough outline** helps you decide **what to write about**.

- A **detailed outline** helps you decide **how to write the essay**.
- A detailed outline includes the **research question, thesis, topic sentences, evidence, and citations**.
- Detailed outlines help you **organize ideas**, stay focused, and write more easily.
- You can **change your detailed outline** as you write and revise your essay.

27.

TOPIC SENTENCES

Introduction to Topic Sentences

Most of the paragraphs in the body of your essay will begin with a topic sentence. This sentence actually plays several roles, and its main purpose is to help you—the writer—“tell the story” of your essay to your reader. Good topic sentences allow your reader to understand your thinking.

Preview Questions:

1. What does a “typical” essay look like? What are the parts of an essay?
2. What are the parts of a paragraph?
3. What are the qualities of a good paragraph?
4. What’s the difference between a thesis statement and a topic sentence?
5. Does every paragraph need a concluding sentence?

Topic Sentences

Writers can and should create a very clear “skeleton” for the ideas in an essay. That skeleton (or **outline** if you don’t like skeletons) usually consists of **the thesis statement and the topic sentences** for each paragraph or section of the essay.

Topic sentences in an essay lead the reader through your ideas in a way that feels logical and “readable.”

Good topic sentences include all of the following:

1. Some kind of **transition** (The most significant challenge...; Another important aspect of...; The final factor to consider...)
2. A **thesis reminder** (e.g. “challenge” in the example above; Other common “thesis ingredients” are reasons, advantages, problems, and so on.)
3. The **topic** of the paragraph (Let’s imagine it is technical problems)
4. The **controlling idea** of the paragraph (What are you saying about the topic?)

When you put all of these things together, you might write the following topic sentence for one of your paragraphs/sections:

***One challenge** for students taking online courses is **technical problems**, which can have a **negative effect** on **students’ success** in a course.*

Note: Often a section of your essay (one of your main points) requires more than one paragraph. In that case, only the first paragraph in the *section* requires this kind of “major transition.” Each additional paragraph still needs a topic sentence, but the goal is simply a smooth continuation of the same idea with a transition to the new sub-topic.

Suggestion: Your topic sentences repeat the supporting points expressed in the thesis statement, but they can do so **in a way that is different from the thesis** (with new vocabulary or with different word forms or grammatical structures if possible).

Exercise #1

Examine the thesis statement and topic sentences from the Model Essay on Peer Review. Discuss whether they contain the elements listed above. Suggest how they might be improved.

Essay part	Example
Thesis statement	And while writing instructors often focus on the benefits of peer review for writers, peer reviewers may experience even greater benefits, and equally importantly, peer review can be just as useful as teacher feedback.
Topic sentence for supporting point 1	One way in which students who participate in peer review benefit from the process is that helping another writer identify their strengths and weaknesses can help the reviewer develop critical-thinking skills and self-awareness.
Topic sentence for supporting point 2	Although many students tend to prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback, there is evidence that peer review can be as helpful and meaningful as teacher feedback.

Exercise #2

Analyze the topic sentences of one of the sample essays or your own draft.

To sum up:

Key Takeaways

Each section of the body of your essay will begin with a topic sentence. This sentence typically occurs at the beginning of the paragraph and will develop one of the supporting points of your thesis. If the thesis statement is the “**road map**” of your essay, then the topic sentences continue to elaborate on the “directions” of where your essay is headed.

28.

PARAGRAPH BASICS

Building Effective Paragraphs

Writing strong paragraphs helps your readers understand your ideas more easily. A good paragraph has one clear main point and supporting sentences that explain or develop that point. When your paragraphs are organized and connected, your writing becomes easier to follow, more convincing, and more professional for college-level work.

Good paragraphs in English have elements that a reader expects and looks for:

- **A topic sentence** that tells your reader what the paragraph is about
- **A controlling idea** in the topic sentence that limits the scope or direction of the topic
- **Body sentences** that add to the information in your topic sentence and develop the controlling idea of the paragraph
- **Cohesion**, which means that the paragraph is **unified**. It contains only information related to the topic sentence
- **Coherence**, which means that relationships among the sentences in the paragraph are clear and easy to follow
- Optionally, a **concluding sentence** might be used to end a paragraph.

Here is an example **topic sentence with a topic and a controlling idea**:

Multicultural individuals (topic) may also enjoy the benefit of their multicultural status in terms of how people perceive them and categorize them in cultural groups. (controlling idea)

Examples adapted from Lee (2016) “Why Managing Multiple Cultural Identities Matters”

NOTE: You can find more information about crafting effective topic sentences in [Chapter 27: Essay structure](#).

Now we can add body sentences to the topic sentence:

Multicultural individuals may also enjoy the benefit of their multicultural status in terms of how people perceive them and categorize them in cultural groups. When individuals can connect to and identify with both or more cultures, they may be perceived by multiple cultural groups as one of them. They can hence more easily play the role of cultural bridge and facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration. Sometimes, when someone has multiple cultural backgrounds or does not identify oneself with one single culture, other people may have difficulty in categorizing this person neatly into one cultural group. As a result of such decategorization, that person may receive more individualized treatment and be seen as more neutral from all the cultural groups and considered as “fair” to assume the leadership role. I have had the privilege to observe concrete examples in which individuals with multiple cultural identities effectively achieved significant results in organizational settings.

What happens to the paragraph if the body sentences lack unity or cohesion?

Multicultural individuals may also enjoy the benefit of their multicultural status in terms of how people perceive them and categorize them in cultural groups. When individuals can connect to and identify with both or more cultures, they may be perceived by multiple cultural groups as one of them. They can hence more easily play the role of cultural bridge and facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration. **Good communication skills are also crucial for getting along with others.** Sometimes, when someone has multiple cultural backgrounds or does not identify oneself with one single culture, other people may have difficulty in categorizing this person neatly into one cultural group. As a result of such decategoriza-

tion, that person may receive more individualized treatment and be seen as more neutral from all the cultural groups and considered as “fair” to assume the leadership role. I have had the privilege to observe concrete examples in which individuals with multiple cultural identities effectively achieved significant results in organizational settings. **I have also noticed that animal lovers are the friendliest colleagues to work with.**

* Notice how confusing the paragraph is with sentences that do not “fit” with the topic sentence.

This paragraph is also coherent. Notice the words and phrases that show relationships among the ideas:

Multicultural individuals may also enjoy the benefit of their multicultural status **in terms of** how people perceive them and categorize them in cultural groups. **When** individuals can connect to **and** identify with both or more cultures, they may be perceived by multiple cultural groups as one of them. They can **hence** more easily play the role of cultural bridge and facilitate mutual understanding and collaboration. **Sometimes, when** someone has multiple cultural backgrounds **or** does not identify oneself with one single culture, other people may have difficulty in categorizing this person neatly into one cultural group. **As a result of** such decategorization, that person may receive more individualized treatment **and** be seen as more neutral from all the cultural groups **and** considered as “fair” to assume the leadership role. I have had the privilege to observe concrete examples in which individuals with multiple cultural identities effectively achieved significant results in organizational settings.

Some paragraphs (but not all) include a concluding sentence; for example:

These benefits and proven results should encourage companies to recruit and hire multicultural employees.

- A paragraph should focus on **one main idea only**.
- The **topic sentence** introduces the topic and the controlling idea.
- The **controlling idea** limits and directs what the paragraph discusses.
- **Body sentences** support and develop the topic sentence.
- **Unity (cohesion)** means all sentences relate to the main idea.
- **Coherence** means ideas are logically connected and easy to follow.
- Some paragraphs include a **concluding sentence**, but not all do.

29.

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Types of Paragraphs

A well-organized paragraph helps readers understand your ideas easily. Most academic paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that introduces the main idea, and the rest of the paragraph focuses on that one topic to keep unity. The sentences should be arranged in a logical order and connected with transitions to create coherence. After the topic sentence, you should include enough supporting ideas (examples, explanations, or evidence) to fully develop the point. Not all paragraphs need a concluding sentence, but the paragraph should feel complete and clearly connected to your overall purpose.

In the following section, you will learn more about paragraph development.

Features of an effective paragraph

An effective paragraph includes the following:

- a topic sentence (typically the first sentence, identifying the topic and controlling idea)
- unity (the paragraph focuses on one topic only)
- coherence (ideas are organized logically and connected with transitions)
- supporting ideas (sentences which sufficiently develop the topic)
- not all paragraphs require a concluding sentence

Common Patterns of Organization

Read about five of the most common patterns of paragraph organization:

1. Listing
2. Generalization and example
3. Sequence of events (chronological)
4. Comparison and contrast
5. Cause and effect

#1 Listing

Explanation: Contains a series of items which support the main idea of the paragraph.

Example paragraph: University students experience various challenges during their first semester of college. Many students find it hard to manage their time because they have more homework and readings than before. Others struggle with understanding new academic expectations or learning how to study effectively. Some students also feel stressed about meeting new people and adjusting to life on campus. These common challenges can make the first semester feel difficult

#2 Generalization and example

Explanation: An idea, word, or concept is explained and then illustrated with an example.

Example paragraph: Online learning can take many forms, one of which is hyflex. Hyflex learning (short for “hybrid flexible”) is a model that allows students to choose whether to attend class in person or join online. This option gives students more control over their schedules and helps them stay on track even when they cannot be on campus. Hyflex courses also provide different ways to participate, such as watching

recordings, joining live sessions, or completing online activities. Because of these choices, hyflex learning can support students with different needs and learning style

#3 Sequence of events

Explanation: Contains information in the order in which it occurred

Example paragraph: Social media for young people has changed a lot over the past twenty years.

First, many students began using early platforms like MySpace and Facebook to connect with friends and share photos. Next, apps such as Instagram and Snapchat became popular because they allowed quick photo and video sharing. After that, TikTok became a major platform, giving young people a place to make short videos and follow trends. These changes show how social media has shifted from simple profiles to fast, creative, and highly visual communication

#4 Comparison and contrast

Explanation: Demonstrates the similarities and differences among two or more topics

Example paragraph: Studying alone and studying in a group are two common ways students prepare for exams. When studying alone, students can focus at their own pace and avoid distractions. This also allows them to review difficult sections slowly and choose study methods that work best for them. In contrast, group study allows students to ask questions, share ideas, and explain concepts to one another. It also helps students learn new strategies from their classmates and stay motivated. Each method can be useful, and many students switch between both depending on the assignment.

#5 Cause and effect

Explanation: Describes an event caused by another event

Example paragraph: Providing access to support services can better ensure student success in the first year of college. When students meet with tutors or visit writing centers, they often improve their skills, which leads to stronger grades and more confidence. Access to advising also helps students choose good classes, and this can prevent them from feeling overwhelmed or falling behind. In addition, wellness and counseling services can reduce stress, which makes it easier for students to stay focused on their coursework. Because these services have positive effects on academic and personal well-being, they play an important role in helping first-year students succeed.

Your turn

Directions: Look at paragraph two from the Model Essay on Peer Review. Which of the patterns above does this paragraph illustrate?

Peer review is used in ESL classes to improve student's English writing or get better grades on writing assignments. Many ESL programs involve international students in peer review to improve their writing skills, and many studies support the idea that peer review is essential to improve students' writing skills. Bijami, Kashef and Nejad (2013) state that critical and specific peer comments can be utilized to enhance students' writing skills and help students become competent writers (p.93). Peer comments can address specific aspects of writing. For example, peer comments help students improve their writing ability in terms of organization and content (Zeqiri, 2012, p. 50). Moreover, helping the writer identify the strengths and weaknesses in his or her writing helps the writer develop self-awareness. According to Tsui and Ng (2000), it is often difficult for students to see their own weaknesses, but peers can point out these problems (p. 166). These examples illustrate how ESL students' writing skills can be enhanced through peer review because it helps them improve awareness of their papers' strengths and weaknesses.

Key Takeaways

- A paragraph has **one clear main idea**.
- The **topic sentence** usually comes first.
- All sentences must **support the same topic**.
- Ideas should be in a **logical order**.
- **Transitions** help readers follow ideas.
- Different paragraphs use different **organization patterns** (e.g., listing, cause and effect).

30.

INTRODUCTION TO EVIDENCE INTEGRATION

Including Your “Voice”

It is important to include your voice in your writing. When writing a research paper, you need to show your thought process to the reader. Although your research paper will be based on your opinion which is supported with evidence, you must integrate the evidence into your own argument, with appropriate signal language. Your “voice” is your interpretation of the evidence and how it supports your claims.

Expressing your voice in academic writing can be explained using two different, but complementary frameworks, the ICE Framework and the Hamburger Analogy.

1 The ICE Framework

Writing effective academic essays requires the use of evidence to support your ideas. Your body paragraphs will include a topic sentence along with evidence you have selected from your sources. In addition, you must introduce, cite, and explain the evidence because the reader cannot see inside your head. You need to comment on the evidence in order to help the reader see its relevance. One framework for integrating evidence is known as “**ICE**”:

1. I = **I**NTRODUCE the evidence.
2. C = Paraphrase the evidence and include a **C**ITATION
3. E = **E**XPLAIN the evidence.

Read the **example** paragraph from the model essay. In addition to the topic sentence and concluding sentence, the paragraph also includes:

- *Introduction of the evidence*
- **Paraphrase and citation of the evidence**
- Explanation of the evidence

Peer review seems to have some unexpected benefits for the reviewer. *There are some studies that show that students who review peers' papers are more likely to improve their writing ability than students who receive peers' comments.* **Lundstrom and Baker (2009)** conducted a study which compared the improvements in writing between givers and receivers of peer feedback and found that of the two groups, the giver group made more progress in writing than the receiver group (p. 32). The givers (or reviewers) learned to judge their own work self-critically by evaluating their peers' writing and transferring this knowledge to their own writing, resulting in significant improvements on their own papers. Thus, responding to a peer's paper is an important way for a student to improve his/her own writing.

In the paragraph above, the writer has effectively incorporated the evidence into their argument. Notice that the writer's "voice" or argument is present in the way they introduce and interpret the evidence. The ICE framework is widely used in higher education, and you'll expand on this skill in ESL 118.

Another way to talk about evidence integration is to visualize it as a **"hamburger."**



2 The Hamburger Analogy

1. The introduction of the evidence is the **TOP BUN**.
2. The paraphrase of the evidence with the citation is the **MEAT**.
3. Your explanation of the evidence is the **BOTTOM BUN**.

In order to connect your evidence to the topic sentence, you need a "top bun." The evidence – the "meat" – should relate to your thesis statement and support your argument. Perhaps the most important part of the hamburger, however, is the bottom bun: it is your responsibility, as a writer, to explain the significance of the evidence. This analysis of the evidence is YOUR explanation of why the evidence is important and how it relates to the topic sentence – and ultimately your thesis statement. In fact, a wise 117 student once said, "Without a bottom bun the meat will fall on the floor."

Like the ICE Framework above, the "buns" represent your "voice." Note that the paraphrased text does not

dominate the paragraph, but rather supports the writer’s argument. In fact, a wise 117 student once said, “Without a bottom bun the meat will fall on the floor.”

As you read your own and your peers’ essays, try to identify the top and bottom buns and consider **to what extent they “ICE” the evidence**. Can you find a top bun? Has the “meat” been correctly cited? Is there a bottom bun? And does the bottom bun sufficiently explain the evidence? Mastering the skill of evidence integration will allow you to succeed in any academic writing course where you will write source-based essays.

Key Takeaways

- Your writing should show **your ideas and thinking**.
- Evidence must **support your argument**, not replace it.
- Always **introduce, cite, and explain** evidence (ICE).
 - **I** = Introduce the evidence.
 - **C** = Paraphrase and Cite the evidence.
 - **E** = Explain why the evidence is important.
- The **explanation is your voice**.
- Evidence should connect clearly to the **topic sentence and thesis**.

31.

STEPS FOR INTEGRATING EVIDENCE

A Step-by-Step Guide for Including Your “Voice”

To integrate evidence, you need to introduce it, paraphrase (or quote in special circumstances), and then connect the evidence to the topic sentence. Below are the steps for “ICE” or the “hamburger analogy.”

Step 1 Introducing evidence: the top bun or “I”

A sentence of introduction before the paraphrase helps the reader know what evidence will follow. You want to provide a preview for the reader of what outside support you will use.

- Example from the model essay: (“I”/top bun) Peer review can increase a student’s interest and confidence in writing. (“C”/meat) Rather than relying on the teacher, the student is actively involved in the writing process (Bijami et al., 2013, p. 94).
- *Notice how the introduction of increasing interest and confidence provides a hint of the evidence that will follow; it links to the idea of becoming a more independent and engaged learner.*

Step 2 Paraphrasing and citing evidence: the meat or “C”

Typically, in academic writing, you will not simply paraphrase a single sentence; instead, you will often summarize information from more than one sentence – you will read a section of text, such as a part of a paragraph, a whole paragraph, or even more than one paragraph, and you will extract and synthesize information from what you have read. This means you will summarize that information and cite it.

Paraphrase/summarize the evidence and then include a citation with the following information. A more detailed explanation of documentation, including citations, can be found in [Unit 44: Documentation](#).

- The author’s last name (but if you do not know the author’s name, use the article title).
- The publication date.

- The page number.

Formats for introducing evidence (when you know the author)

- Gambino (2015) explains how social networks help foster personal connections (p. 1).
- According to Gambino (2015), social networks help foster personal connections (p. 1).
- Social networks help foster personal connections (Gambino, 2015, p. 1).

Formats for introducing evidence (when the author is unknown)

- Several tips for college success are explained (“Preparing for College,” 2015, p. 2).
- Example from the model essay: Rather than relying on the teacher, the student is actively involved in the writing process (Bijami et al., 2013, p. 94).
- *Here we can see a paraphrase, not a direct quotation, with proper citation format.*

Step 3 Connecting evidence: the bottom bun or “E”

You must explain the significance of the evidence and how it relates to your topic sentence or to previously mentioned information in the paragraph or essay. This connecting explanation could be one or more sentences. This “bottom bun” is NOT a paraphrase; instead, it is *your explanation* of why you chose the evidence and how it supports your own ideas.

- Example from the model essay: (“I”/top bun) *Peer review can increase a student’s interest and confidence in writing.* (“C”/meat) **Rather than relying on the teacher, the student is actively involved in the writing process (Bijami et al., 2013, p. 94).** (“E”/bottom bun) As students take more responsibility for their writing, from developing their topic to writing drafts, they become more confident and inspired.
- *Notice how the “E” or “bottom bun” elaborates on the idea of becoming an independent learner.*

Step 3 Strategies : Questions to ask yourself when analyzing the function of evidence

What is the function of the “E” / bottom bun? Does it...

- interpret the evidence?
- analyze the evidence?
- describe an outcome?
- provide an example?
- make a prediction?
- evaluate the evidence?
- challenge the evidence?
- elaborate on evidence that came before in the paragraph or essay?
- compare the evidence with something else or another piece of evidence?
- connect the evidence to a previously stated idea in the paragraph or essay?

Choose a function: Evaluate, Compare, Analyze, Connect, Predict

Watch this video: Evidence & Citations

Watch this video on the importance of explaining your evidence and including citations.

From: Ariel Bassett



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=172#oembed-1>

Language Stems for Integrating Evidence

The sentence stems below can help you develop your command of more complex academic language.

Stems **to refer to outside knowledge and/or experts**

- It is / has been believed that...
- Researchers have noted that...
- Experts point out that...
- Based on these figures... / These figures show... / The data (seems to) suggest(s)...

Stems for introducing example evidence

- X (year) illustrates this point with an example about... (p. #).
- One example is.... (X, year, p. #).
- As an example of this/ ____, (X, year, p. #)
- is an illustration / example of... (citation).
- For example, ...or For instance, ...

Stems **to support arguments and claims**

- According to X (year), (p. #).
- As proof of this, X (year) claims.... (p. #).
- X (year) provides evidence for/that... (p. #).
- X (year) demonstrates that... (p. #).

Stems **to draw conclusions (helpful to use in the explanation / bottom bun)**

- This suggests / demonstrates / indicates / shows / illustrates...

(In the above examples, you can combine the demonstrative pronoun “this” with a noun. Ex: “these results suggests...” or “this example illustrates...” or “these advantages show....”)

- This means...
- In this way,...
- It is possible that...
- Such evidence seems to suggest... / Such evidence suggests...

Stems to agree with a source (helpful to use in the explanation / bottom bun)

- As X correctly notes...
- As X rightly observes, ...
- As X insightfully points out, ...

Stems to disagree with a source (helpful to use in the explanation / bottom bun)

- Although X contends that...
- However, it remains unclear whether...
- Critics are quick to point out that...

32.

AVOIDING "DUMPED EVIDENCE"

How to Avoid “Dumped” Evidence

Integrating evidence, especially step three, can be a challenging part of the writing process. It may be tempting when writing a paragraph to simply “dump” several pieces of evidence, in the form of quotations or phrases, without any attempt to introduce or explain the evidence. Notice how the example below lacks integration.

Example

Social networks enhance our self-esteem. Gambino (2015) writes that they provide opportunities for people to re-connect with old friends, deepen ties with existing friends, and create new connections, as they meet new friends regardless of where they live (p. 1). Millennials especially like using Instagram and Snapchat to keep in touch with their high school friends when they go to college (Anderson, 2013, p. 5). One survey showed that more than 80% of college students use social networks more than email to stay in touch with their friends (Moore, 2016, p. 9). According to Michael Alexander, a Stanford University psychologist, students currently prefer Facebook or Messenger instead of phone calls to maintain contact with their families compared to twenty years ago (as cited in Lee, 2014, p. 6). All of this evidence suggests that social networks are important for young people.

Why This Paragraph is Weak

In the example above, the writer has simply listed pieces of evidence one after another, but the paragraph does not include the writer’s voice. The writer’s voice is needed to connect the ideas and build a clear argument. As a result, the paragraph is not cohesive, and it is unclear how the ideas are related to each other.

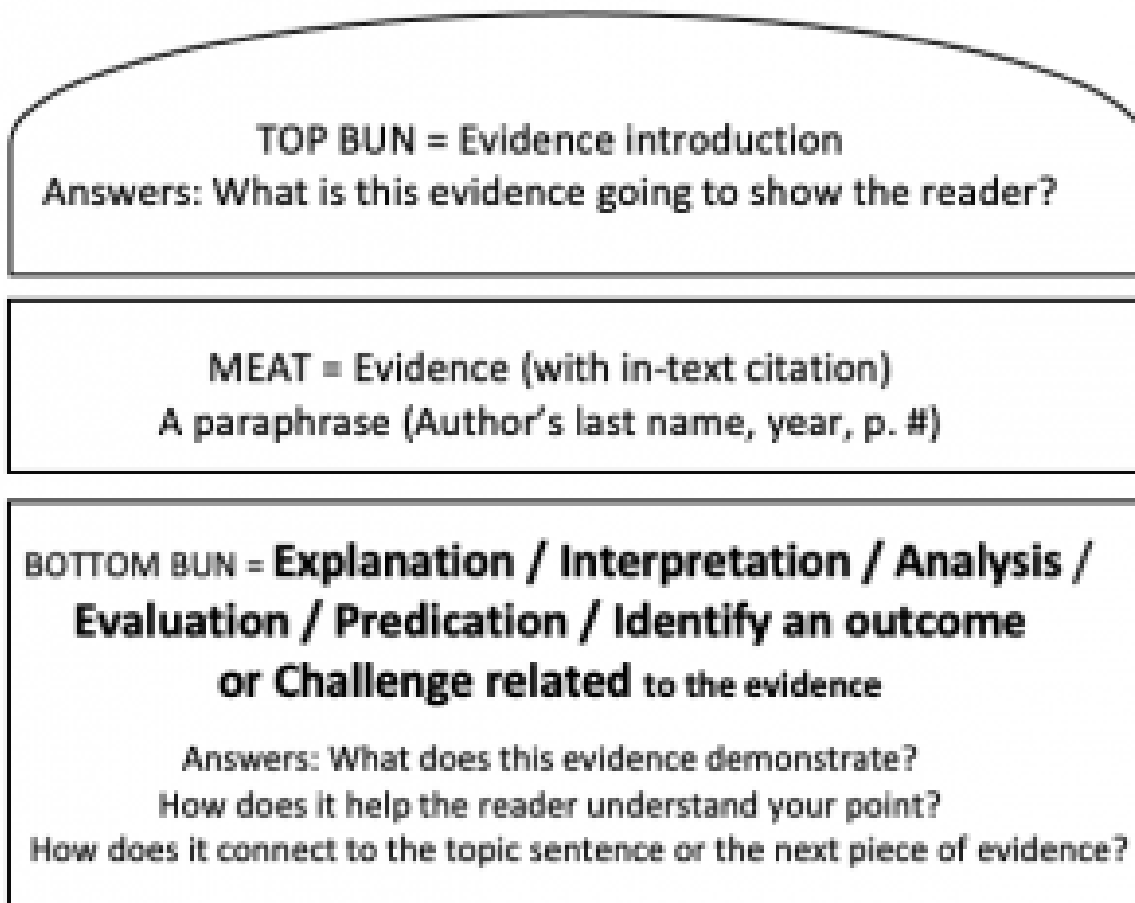
How to Fix Dumped Evidence

To avoid dumped evidence, you must make your thinking visible to the reader. This is done by:

- **Introducing** the evidence (top bun / I)
- **Paraphrasing and citing** the evidence (meat / C)
- **Explaining** why the evidence is important and how it supports your claim (bottom bun / E)

Remember: **Your explanation is your voice.** Without it, the evidence does not clearly support your argument. As one student wisely said, *“Without a bottom bun, the meat will fall on the floor.”*

Below is the **Research Hamburger** as a quick guide to remind you where your voice belongs in a paragraph.



- Do not just **list evidence** in a paragraph.
- Evidence must be **introduced and explained**. Don't forget to include **attribution**.
- Your **analysis shows your voice**.
- Use **ICE**: Introduce, Cite, Explain.
- The **explanation (bottom bun)** is the most important part.
- Clear writing = **clear thinking made visible**.

33.

INTRODUCTIONS

Preview Questions:

1. Why are introductions important?
2. What are the components of an effective introduction?

Writing Effective Introductions

The introduction is the first paragraph of an essay. It is often one of the hardest parts to write. Many writers choose to write the introduction **after** they finish the body of the essay. This is a good strategy because it helps the introduction match the main ideas of the paper.

You may want to revise your introduction and conclusion at the same time in order to maintain consistency to the start and finish of your essay.

The Three Functions of an Effective Introduction

1. Engage your reader using **opening statements**.
2. Introduce your topic and provide **connecting information**.
3. State your **thesis** (usually the last sentence of the introduction).

Example of an introduction (from the Model Essay on peer feedback)

The process of writing academic papers involves many steps: exploring a topic through reading and writing, narrowing a topic, organizing the ideas, writing multiple drafts, getting feedback and making revisions. Over multiple drafts, the writer refines their ideas in part by getting feedback from readers. In a classroom, the teacher and the classmates, or peers, can serve as easily accessible readers. Peer feedback, also called peer review or peer response, is widely used in writing classes for both native speakers and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. *Peer review benefits both the writer and the reviewer, and it can be just as useful as teacher feedback.*

Analysis of the Example Introduction

- **Sentences 1–2:** The writer begins with a **general description** of the writing process.
- **Sentence 3:** The focus becomes more **specific**, introducing peer feedback in the classroom.
- **Sentence 4:** The writer **defines peer feedback** and gives background information, including the context of ESL writing classes.
- **Sentence 5 (Thesis):** The last sentence states the main idea: peer review is beneficial and as useful as teacher feedback.

The introduction prepares the reader for the supporting points that will appear in the body of the essay.

Function 1: Engage your Reader

The first one or two sentences of an introduction should get the reader interested in the topic. These are called “opening statements” because they start the essay and show what the essay will be about. Some common ways to write an opening statement are listed below:

- **Describe a problem or issue:**
Explain a problem connected to the topic and give a little background so the reader understands why it is important.
- **Give a short historical review:**
Explain something that happened in the past and show how it relates to the situation today.
- **Use a quotation, fact, or statistic:**

Start with a quote from an expert or an interesting number or fact from a source. Make sure it clearly connects to the topic and is cited correctly.

- **Define an important term:**

Explain a key word or idea that helps the reader understand the topic better.

- **Move from general to specific:**

Begin with a broad idea (for example, “Many college students...”) and then move slowly toward the specific topic of the essay.

Unlike magazine writing, which often tries to “grab attention” with dramatic opening lines, academic writing is more objective and direct. Avoid starting with proverbs (“Every coin has two sides”), questions (“Why do students come to the United States to study?”), or personal stories (“When I was a high school student”) because these sound too informal for college writing. Instead, begin with relevant information that helps the reader understand your topic.

Function 2: Provide Connecting Information

After the opening statements, give more explanation to guide the reader toward the thesis. This section may include:

- Background information
- A short explanation of the topic
- A definition or brief history

The goal is to **connect the opening** to the **main idea** of the essay.

Function 3: State your Thesis

The **thesis statement** is usually the last sentence of the introduction. It clearly states:

- The main idea of the essay
- The writer’s position or claim

Think of the thesis as a **road map**. It helps the reader understand what the essay will discuss and how it will be organized.

Key Takeaways

- Introductions prepare the reader for the essay.
- Strong introductions have **three functions**: engage, connect, and state the thesis.
- Opening statements should be academic and clear, not personal or dramatic.
- The thesis statement usually comes at the end and guides the entire essay.

34.

CONCLUSIONS

Preview Questions:

1. Why are conclusions important?
2. What are the components of an effective conclusion?

Writing Effective Conclusions

Since the conclusion will be the last thing your audience will read, it is an opportunity to remind the audience of the main ideas in your essay. It should therefore be written thoughtfully and carefully, and ideally, it will leave the audience with something to think about. The conclusion should summarize the important points, but it should not introduce any new information.

The Three Parts of Effective Conclusions

1. **Summarize the main points of your essay**; this is not simply a paraphrase of your thesis statement.
2. Include an *analysis of your main points*, expressing a logical conclusion and answering the question, “So what?” about your topic.
3. End with a **final comment** that leaves a memorable impression on the reader.

Example of a conclusion (from the Model Essay on peer feedback)

Many studies have shown the advantages of peer review such as improving students' writing ability and language skills, developing students' critical thinking skills and creating a student-centered classroom environment. That peer review is a time-consuming activity for both writing teachers and students is an undeniable fact, and students who are inexperienced in peer review will need training and guidance. *Nevertheless, this investment in time and training gives students a powerful way to improve not only their writing skills, but also their abilities as thinkers and problem-solvers.*

Analysis of the Example Conclusion

- The **first sentence summarizes the main ideas**, using different language from the thesis statement.
- The **next sentence provides an analysis** of these ideas, pointing out that peer review takes time and requires training. This sentence answers the question, “So what?” Why is peer review important?”
- The **last sentence leaves the reader with a positive impression of peer review** as a way to enhance not only writing skills, but also thinking skills. Here the student has use the strategy of repeating the approach in the introduction.

Wrapping Up Your Essay: A Final Comment

Providing a closing thought can make your essay more memorable. Some techniques include:

- **Repeat the approach** you used in the **introduction**.
- Use a **quotation**.
- Include a powerful related **fact** or **detail** that adds to the impact.
- Provide an **evaluation** of the content.
- Make a **recommendation**.
- Make a **prediction**.

The conclusion does not merely summarize and repeat the main ideas and thesis statement; it extends what has been written through final commentary and analysis, which will help your reader remember what's truly important about your essay.

Key Takeaways

- The conclusion is the **last thing the reader remembers**.
- A good conclusion **summarizes main ideas** using new language, not copied sentences.
- Effective conclusions explain **why the ideas matter** (“So what?”).
- A conclusion **should not add new information**.
- Strong conclusions end with a **strong, memorable final thought**.

PART V

UNIT 5: CONDUCTING INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

In this Unit

- Understanding the research process
- Learning to choose and narrow a topic appropriately
- Tips for finding and evaluating sources
- Distinguishing scholarly journals from other periodicals
- Strategies for reading academic journal articles

35.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Crucial advice for writing a successful research paper

READ, READ, READ.

To write a strong research paper, you first need to learn as much as you can about your topic. As you read different sources, you begin to understand the major issues, debates, and questions people have about that topic.

Reading helps you narrow your focus, develop your own viewpoint, and write a clear thesis statement with strong supporting points. In other words: **Good research gives you the background you need to form an informed opinion and make a strong, well supported argument.**

Key Takeaways

- Strong research papers begin with **careful, purposeful reading**.
- Reading for research means reading **multiple sources**, not just one.
- In this course, reading helps you understand the topic, notice key issues, and narrow your focus.
- Reading supports your **thesis, viewpoints, and use of evidence**.
- You read first to learn: **writing comes after understanding**.

Watch this overview of the research process

From Steely Library NKU

<https://youtu.be/HMpTtjIEhY>

36.

CHOOSING AND NARROWING A TOPIC

Preview Questions:

1. What should you keep in mind when choosing a topic?
2. How can you determine if a topic is suitable for you?
3. What are some problems you might encounter with topics? How can you know if a topic is feasible for research or not?
4. How can you narrow a topic?

Guidelines for Choosing a Topic

When choosing a topic, ask yourself:

- What am I genuinely interested in?
- What have I read about or heard in the news recently that caught my attention?
- Is there something from one of my classes that connects to this assignment?
- Is anything in my life right now (experiences, challenges, questions) connected to this topic?

Exploring Potential Topics

Use the following sources to explore your topic and learn about different viewpoints:

1. UW Madison Library Databases: From the [Libraries homepage](#), choose Databases from the drop-down menu and search for:
 1. **Opposing Viewpoints** – Short summaries of major issues with different sides of the debate
 2. **CQ Researcher** – In-depth reports with background, key arguments, and recent developments

2. Free Online Resources:

1. [Wikipedia](#) – Good for learning basic ideas and key terms
2. [ProCon.org](#) – Clear explanations of arguments for and against controversial issues
3. [Pew Research Center](#) – Reliable data, reports, and statistics on social, political, and technological issues
4. [Our World in Data](#) – Great for global issues (climate, health, technology) with clear explanations and visual data

These sources help you understand an issue, see multiple perspectives, and narrow your topic.

Using Generative AI for Preliminary Research

Below are prompts for exploring a topic

You should try making a list of synonyms yourself first. Then turn to AI for confirmation and expansion.

Basic Synonym Search Prompts

- What are some common synonyms for [my topic word]?
- What words have a similar meaning to [my topic] in academic writing?
- What is another word for [my topic] that is more formal?
- What simple and advanced synonyms are used for [my topic]?

Topic Expansion Prompts

- What words are closely related to [my topic]?
- What larger idea does [my topic] belong to?
- What are smaller or more specific words connected to [my topic]?
- What words are often used when people talk about [my topic]?

Understanding the Results Prompts

- I searched for these words about [my topic]. Can you explain what each word means in simple English?
- I found these related terms for [my topic]. Can you explain how they are connected?
- Can you explain the difference between these two words in an academic context?

Examples of Topic Narrowing

Make sure your topic is focused enough to be fully explained within the assignment’s page limit. A broad topic usually leads to vague writing, while a narrowed topic helps you go deeper and be more specific.

Below are examples of how a broad topic can be narrowed into something more manageable.

General Topic	Focused Topic	Narrowed Topic	Research Question
Children	Children’s rights	Child labor in developing countries, such as Bangladesh	Is it a good idea to make child labor in the clothing industry in Bangladesh illegal?
Organic food	Labelling of organic foods	labelling of organic foods in the United states	What are the most important criteria the US Department of Agriculture should consider when labelling foods as organic?
Refugee crisis	Immigrants coming to the United States	Immigration policies for people from Venezuela seeking asylum in the United States	How will raising the quota for accepting asylum from Venezuela to come to the United States impact the US economy?
Animal rights	Genetic engineering of extinct animals	Using genetic engineering to bring back extinct animals like the Dodo for research	Should scientists be allowed to use genetic engineering to create Dodo birds for research purposes?
Recycling	Single-use plastics recycling	Kenya’s efforts to ban single-use plastics to reduce pollution	Is Kenya’s ban on single-use plastic products effective in reducing pollution?

Strategies for Narrowing a Topic

Writers can narrow a broad topic by asking specific questions about it. You do not need to use all of these—often 2–3 are enough.

1. Location

1. Where is this topic happening? Focus on one country, city, or region.

2. Examples
 1. Climate change → Climate change in **Bangladesh**
 2. AI in education → AI use in **U.S. community colleges**
 3. Food insecurity → Food insecurity in **urban areas of Wisconsin**
2. **Stakeholders (people involved)**
 1. Who is affected by this topic? Focus on a specific group of people.
 2. Examples
 1. Social media → **Social media and teenagers**
 2. Automation → **Automation and warehouse workers**
 3. Electric vehicles → **Electric vehicles and low-income consumers**
3. **Type or Category**
 1. What kind or version of the topic? Focus on one type, platform, or form.
 2. Examples
 1. Social media → **TikTok**
 2. Renewable energy → **Solar energy**
 3. Artificial intelligence → **AI chatbots in customer service**
4. **Issue or Problem**
 1. What specific problem are you studying? Focus on one challenge or debate.
 2. Examples
 1. Electric vehicles → **Battery disposal problems**
 2. Online learning → **Student motivation in online classes**
 3. Fast fashion → **Labor conditions in garment factories**
5. **Impact or Effect**
 1. What effect does this topic have? On whom? Focus on one major result or consequence.
 2. Examples
 1. AI in hiring → **Effects on job opportunities for new graduates**
 2. Climate change → **Effects on coastal communities**
 3. Social media → **Effects on mental health of teenagers**

Using Generative AI for Narrowing a Topic

Below are prompts for narrowing a topic

You should try narrowing your topic yourself. Grappling with the narrowing process builds your critical thinking skills.

Topic Narrowing Prompts

- My general topic is [topic]. What is one specific issue I can focus on?
- Help me narrow my topic by choosing one group, one place, or one situation.
- How can I make my topic more specific and easier to research?
- Is this topic too broad, too narrow, or just right for a 4-page college research paper?
- Here is my narrowed topic: [topic]. Help me write one clear research question using how or should.

Key Takeaways

- Choose a topic that **genuinely interests you** and connects to your classes, experiences, or current issues.
- Use **Wikipedia, a General Google Search, Generative AI, or popular sources** to explore topics and learn background information.
- Use **library databases** and **reliable websites** to locate evidence to use in your writing.
- Reading **multiple perspectives** helps you understand an issue and narrow your focus.
- A strong topic is **specific and manageable**, not too broad.
- **Narrowing** your topic helps you and develop a focused research question and write a more concentered argument.

Watch the video on Developing a Research Question

From Steely Library NIKU

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QauomrFcrXk>

37.

FINDING AND EVALUATING SOURCES

Types of Sources

Consider the different types of sources and the pros and cons of using each source type:

Source	Pro	Con
Electronic databases	easy to use; strong search tools; academic and reliable sources	too many results if your topic has not been narrowed
Books	online books are easy to search; you can read one chapter instead of the whole book	physical books are heavy; not all books are online or PDFs
Newspapers	short articles; easy to read; good for current events	may not be academic or current; some articles can be biased
Google Scholar	easy to use; includes scholarly articles and citations	some articles cost money (but you never pay when you use Google Scholar in the databases)
General internet search (i.e. Google)	very easy to use; free; good for background information	too many results; information may not be reliable
Websites	can provide up-to-date information; useful for statistics, organizations, and official reports	quality varies widely; some sites may be unverified, or outdated
Generative AI search	easy to use; helps find ideas and keywords; may find sources	may give false sources; not all sources are or real

General Source Evaluation Criteria

Not every source you find will be reliable, appropriate, or useful for an academic research paper. Before you spend time reading or downloading an article, use the questions below to decide whether the source is worth using.

1. **Relevance: Is the source directly related to my topic?**

If it doesn't clearly connect to your research question, it may not be worth reading.

2. **Readability: Can I understand the source?**

If it is too technical, too advanced (or too long), choose something more accessible.

3. **Evidence: What types of information are in the source?**

Types may include: expert opinion, facts and statistics, results from research studies, real examples, or historical or current examples

4. **Source age: How current is the source?**

As a general rule, use sources from the past **five years**, unless you're comparing past and present, or you need historical background. Older sources are not “bad” but they must fit your purpose.

5. **Bias: Is the source biased or promoting a specific agenda?**

All sources have a point of view. The key is recognizing it. For example, if you're researching *animal rights* and use a PETA article, remember that PETA takes a strong activist stance. This doesn't mean you can't use it, just that you need to understand the perspective behind the information. PETA stands for “People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.”

What about Wikipedia?

You can use **Wikipedia** to get general background information and vocabulary. However: Do not cite Wikipedia in your research paper. Its pages change frequently and are not considered reliable academic sources. Check the **references** at the bottom to find better sources.

What about a Google search?

Sources from a general **Google search** may or may not be appropriate. You must evaluate them carefully using the criteria above.

Where to find Strong Sources: Use the UW Libraries Website

Sources from the **UW–Madison Libraries' databases** are usually reliable and academic.

- Visit the [UW Libraries Homepage](#) to access the databases
- Consult the [UW Library Research Tutorials](#)
- Use a [UW Supported Citation Manager](#) to manage your sources
- [Instructions for using Google Scholar](#) through the UW Libraries databases

Using Generative AI Tools (Important!)

Guidelines for the appropriate use of Generative AI for research

Generative AI tools (like ChatGPT, Copilot, or Gemini) can be helpful for:

- brainstorming
- clarifying difficult concepts
- finding keywords
- summarizing complex ideas

However, they should *not* be used as sources. AI tools:

- do not provide original research
- may generate inaccurate or outdated information
- cannot be cited as academic evidence

Use AI for *thinking and organizing*, not for *research findings*. If your instructor allows you to use AI for help, always:

- check information against reliable academic sources
- cite your use of the tool according to class or university guidelines

Resource

See the [UW's Library Research Guide on Generative AI](#) for more information.

Key Takeaways

- Different types of sources have strengths and limits; choose sources that fit your **purpose**.
- Not every source is appropriate for academic writing. Sources must be **evaluated** carefully.
- **Strong sources** are relevant, understandable, evidence-based, current, and transparent about bias.
- **UW–Madison Library databases** are the best place to find reliable academic sources.

- **Wikipedia** can help with background knowledge but should not be cited.
- **Generative AI tools** can support thinking and organization, but they are **not academic sources** and must be used carefully.

Watch this video on evaluating sources

From Kristina Ulmer



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=656#oembed-1>

38.

DISTINGUISHING SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLES FROM POPULAR ARTICLES

Understanding Scholarly and Popular Sources

Journals, magazines, and newspapers are important sources for up-to-date information in all disciplines. You will use two main types of sources from the UW Libraries:

Types of sources

Scholarly articles: Research-based publications written by experts for an academic or professional audience

Popular articles: Publications that report on general-interest topics such as current events, news stories, or research in ways that inform or entertain

Below are the general criteria for each type of source.

Scholarly articles from research journals

- **Purpose:** report the results of original research or analysis
- **Audience:** scholars, researchers, and students of a particular field of study
- **Authors:** are experts in their field; author names and credentials always included
- **Appearance:** clearly labeled sections (e.g. “methods” or “discussion”); may contain charts and graphs reporting research results; photos or images only if relevant to the field
- **Language:** technical or specialized language

- **Content:** usually contains the following
 - an abstract (a short summary) at the beginning of the article
 - their research methodology
 - research results and analysis
 - bibliography of works cited
- **Also called:** academic journals or articles
- **Publication process:** reviewed by other scholars before publication; sources always included

Examples

- [American Journal of Sociology](#)
- [American Economic Review](#)
- [Communication Education](#)
- [New England Journal of Medicine](#)
- [Internet and Higher Education](#)
- [Journal of Theoretical Biology](#)

Tips for Finding Scholarly articles

- Access the academic journals through the [UW Libraries Website](#) (not through their webpages because you need a paid subscription).
- Access [Google Scholar](#) through the UW Libraries Website to download articles for free.

High-quality, substantive popular articles

- **Purpose:** To report on general-interest topics by explaining current news, stories, or research in clear and engaging ways.
- **Audience:** A general audience that wants reliable, easy-to-understand information about important topics.
- **Authors:** Staff writers, journalists, or freelance writers; sometimes experts. Author names and basic cre-

dentials are usually included.

- **Appearance:** Often look like magazines or news sites and may include photos, images, charts, or graphs that help explain the topic. They may contain some advertisements.
- **Language:** Written in clear, everyday language for interested readers; may be more detailed than basic popular sources but not technical like scholarly sources.
- **Content:** Explains current events, research, or trends with more depth and accuracy than general popular sources.
- **Publication Process:** Reviewed by editors; information is usually checked, and articles may include sources or links to additional information.

Examples

- [Business Week](#)
- [Christian Science Monitor](#)
- [Congressional Quarterly](#) (CQ Researcher)**
- [Discover](#)
- [The Economist](#)
- [National Geographic](#)
- [Nature](#)
- [Pew Research Group](#)
- [Scientific American](#)
- [US News and World Report](#)
- [National Public Radio](#)
- [Public Broadcasting Service](#)
- **Newspapers: [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Independent](#), [BBC News](#) or [CBC News](#)

** Access this database and these newspapers through the [UW Libraries Website](#).

When searching in databases

Popular articles generally do not contain an abstract. However, if you are searching for a popular article in a database, there will typically be an abstract in the database entry itself. Note that this is an *abstract in the database*, not the article itself.

Can I use AI to Locate Articles?

Pros and Cons of using AI to Locate Articles

Generative AI tools (including chat-based systems) can:

- Suggest **search terms and keywords**
 - Example: “social media effects” → *digital engagement, online identity, SNS usage*
- Identify **major themes and debates** in a topic area
- Recommend **possible authors, journals, or types of sources**
- Help translate a **research question into database-ready queries**
- Point you toward **likely places to search** (e.g., education journals, policy reports)

Think of AI as a **research navigator**, not the archive itself.

Pros of using AI to locate articles:

- Helps you get started with a new or unclear topic
- Suggests search terms, keywords, and related concepts
- Identifies major debates and viewpoints
- Saves time in the early stages of research
- Supports efficient use of library databases and Google Scholar

Cons and limitations of using AI:

- May invent or produce incorrect citations
- Cannot reliably judge source quality or peer review status
- Often misses paywalled or specialized academic sources
- Tends to repeat common viewpoints and overlook emerging or marginalized scholarship

- Can create false confidence and reduce careful reading
- Misuse may lead to academic integrity or policy issues

Bottom line:

- Students still need **library literacy skills**.
- Use AI as a **research helper**, not a source. Always verify AI-suggested articles in a real database.

Key Takeaways

- Journals, magazines, and newspapers provide important and up-to-date information for research.
- Scholarly articles and high-quality popular articles serve different purposes and audiences.
- Scholarly articles report original research and are reviewed by experts before publication.
- Popular articles explain current issues in clear language for a general audience.
- The UW–Madison Libraries are the best place to find reliable academic sources.
- AI tools can help you brainstorm keywords and search strategies, but they are **not sources**.
- Every source—especially AI-suggested ones—must be found in a real database and evaluated carefully.

Watch the video below

From the Evelyn & Howard Boroughs Library



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=234#oembed-1>

Sources consulted

1. [Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries Research Guides](#)
2. and [Cornell University Library Research & Learning Services](#)

Olin Library

Cornell University Library

Ithaca, NY, USA

39.

READING ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES

What is an Academic Journal Article?

Academic journals publish articles written by researchers about their work. These articles often present new research, explain theories, or review earlier studies. Most academic journals are peer reviewed, which means experts check the research for quality before it is published. When searching for sources, look for information that shows whether an article is peer reviewed.

What is the peer-review process?

Peer review is a process used to evaluate research before it is published.

1. A researcher submits an article to a journal.
2. The editors send it to experts in the same field.
3. These experts review the article and give feedback.
4. The editors decide to reject the article or ask the author to revise it.
5. After revisions, the article may be reviewed again and then accepted.

Main Parts of a Research Article

Research articles may look different depending on the journal, but most include the same basic information. Most research articles include these sections:

1. **Abstract:** Most articles start with a paragraph called the “abstract,” which very briefly summarizes the whole article. **Questions you should be able to answer after reading the abstract:**
 - *What is the main data set used in this paper?*
 - *What is the main question being asked?*
 - *What are the basic conclusions?*

- *Should I read this paper? Will it help me with my research?*

2. **Introduction** (*“What is this article about?”*): This section introduces the topic of the article completely and discusses what the article contributes to existing knowledge on the topic. **Questions you should be able to answer after reading the introduction:**

- *What is/are the major research question(s) the authors are asking?*
- *Why is this question important to the field or more broadly?*
- *How much research has been done on this topic already?*
- *How is the research in this article different from what came before?*

3. **Literature review** (*“What do we already know about this topic and what is left to discover?”*): A review of existing research and theory on the topic is either included in the introduction or comes after the introduction under its own subtitle. The lit review is meant to discuss previous work on the topic, point out what questions remain, and relate the research presented in the rest of the article to the existing literature. Here should also be a discussion of what the hypotheses were at the beginning of the project.

4. **Methods and data** (*“How did the author(s) do the research?”*): There is always some discussion of the methods used to conduct the study being reported.

5. **Analysis and Results** (*“What did the author(s) find and how did they find it?”*): Another important section or sections will be devoted to discussing the kind of analysis that was conducted on the data and what the results are.

6. **Discussion and Conclusion** (*“What does it all mean and why is it important?”*): Articles typically end by discussing what the results mean and how the study contributes to existing knowledge. Here the research questions are answered and it should be clear at this point whether or not the hypotheses were supported. The conclusion is usually the final section and it typically places the research in a larger context, explaining the importance of the research and discussing where future research on the topic should be headed.

Questions you should be able to answer after reading the conclusions:

- How do the authors answer the original research question(s) (see Introduction)?
- What specific data support their answer to that question?
- What specific data contradicts or confuses their answer to that question?
- What broader implications for the field, if any, are raised by the results of this study?

Shortcuts to reading academic journal articles

When conducting research, you will encounter dozens of possibilities in your search for sources that may be relevant to your research. Most often you will find more sources than you can possibly read thoroughly in the time you have to do your project, so you will not have time to read everything from start to finish.

Here are some **hints** on how to sift through the possibilities, discard articles that are less helpful, and recognize potentially important sources. Type your textbox content here.

1. **Start with the abstract.**

The title might not tell you much, but the abstract gives a quick summary of the whole article. After reading it, you should know whether the article is useful for your project or if you should look for something else. Many journals also include a list of keywords, which give you more clues about the topic.

2. **Read the introduction and the discussion/conclusion next.**

These sections explain the main argument and the key ideas. They also give you a quick sense of what the researchers found. This helps you decide if the article is relevant to your work.

3. **Then look at the methods section.**

If the article still seems helpful, check how the research was done. Was it a qualitative study (interviews, observations) or a quantitative study (numbers, surveys, statistics)? What data did the researchers use.

4. **Finally, read the analysis and results.**

If you're committed to using the article, read the detailed findings. This part explains exactly what the researchers discovered.

Using information from academic journal articles in your own writing

1. Use **citations** when including information from journal articles.
2. **Avoid citing information from the abstract.** The purpose of the abstract is to help you decide if the article is appropriate / suitable for reading. Any information you cite from the article should be from *the body of the article itself*, not from the abstract.
3. If the information is **too technical or difficult** to understand, it will also be very difficult for you to paraphrase. You should probably **find a different article**.

Key Takeaways

- Academic journals publish expert research that is peer-reviewed.
- Research articles follow a standard structure.
- Reading the abstract, introduction, and conclusion helps you decide if a source is useful.
- You do not need to read every article all the way through.
- Cite information from the article itself, not the abstract.
- If an article is too difficult to understand, choose a different source.

Watch this video on peer review

From libncsu



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=232#oembed-1>

40.

EVALUATING POPULAR SOURCES

Guidelines for Using Popular Sources

Popular sources (such as news articles, magazines, blogs, and general-audience websites) can be useful for examples, contemporary illustrations, and basic background information. Because they are not written for academic audiences, use these criteria to evaluate them carefully:

Who is the **author or publisher**? (Is it a reliable source?)

- Is the author identified? Do they have relevant expertise or professional experience?
- If it's an organization, is it reputable? (e.g., established news outlets, well known magazines)
- For websites, look for an About page to identify authors or organizations.
- Beware of anonymous authors or websites with unclear ownership.

When was it published? (Is it current information?)

- Use sources published within the last 5 years unless you need older material for historical context.
- When was the article published or the website last revised? This tells you if the source is maintained regularly.
- Check whether the information is still accurate (especially for technology, science, health, or current events).

What is the **purpose** of the source?

- Is it meant to inform, entertain, persuade, or sell something?
- For academic purposes, look for sources whose primary purpose is to inform.
- Reliable sources are transparent about their purpose and avoid emotionally charged language.

Is there any **bias or agenda**?

- All sources have a point of view, but some push a particular stance or ideology.
- Look for:

- emotionally charged language
- one-sided arguments
- selective use of facts
- If there is a clear bias or agenda, consider whether the source is appropriate. If you still decide to use it, acknowledge the bias in your writing.

Is the information **credible**?

- Cross-check facts with academic or governmental sources when possible.
- If information appears sensational or surprising, verify it elsewhere:
 - Search the same claim on:
 - Major news outlets
 - Peer-reviewed sources
 - Government or academic sources
- If only **one** source has the information, be skeptical.

Is this an appropriate type of website? Check the domain:

- .edu → usually educational institutions
- .gov → government sources
- .org → nonprofits (some highly reliable, some biased)
- .com → commercial (neutral to reliable)

UW Libraries' Resources

- [Using Popular Sources tutorial](#)
- [Using Popular Sources video](#)

Key Takeaways

- Popular sources can help with **background information** and **examples**.

- Check who wrote the source and if it is **trustworthy**.
- Use **recent sources** and make sure the information is accurate.
- Think about the **purpose** and **possible bias** of the source.
- Check important facts using **reliable academic or government sources**.

PART VI

UNIT 6: ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY WRITING

In this Unit

- Introduction to the fundamental features of argumentative essay writing
- Understanding different patterns of organization for argumentative essays
- Strategies for developing research questions and thesis statements for argumentative essays
- Understanding the features of counterarguments and refutations
- Strategies for avoiding logical fallacies
- Strategies for using hedging language

41.

WRITING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

Elements of an Argumentative Essay

An argumentative essay explains a topic and clearly shows the writer's opinion. The writer makes **claims** (main ideas) and supports them with **evidence** (proof). A strong argumentative essay also shows that the writer understands both sides of the issue, not only the side they agree with.

Claims and Evidence

- **Claim:** what you believe about the topic
- **Evidence:** information that supports your claim

Key Terms

- **Pro-Argument:** your opinion and reasons
- **Counterargument:** the opposite opinion
- **Concession:** admitting that the other side has some good points
- **Refutation (or Rebuttal or Counterclaim):** your response to the counterargument

Example

- **Claim:** Attending class regularly leads to better academic performance for college students.
- **Evidence:** University data shows that students with higher attendance rates usually earn higher final grades.

1. Arguments for your viewpoint (Pro-Arguments)

In order to convince your readers of your viewpoint, you need to carefully construct your arguments. These arguments that support your viewpoint are called *pro-arguments*. To be effective, they should do the following:

a. Make Sense (Be Logical)

The arguments need to be **logical and appropriate** for your opinion on the topic.

- **Example:** If your opinion is that **taking online classes benefits college students**, your arguments should
 -  Focus on the **advantages** of online learning, such as flexibility, time management, or access to recorded lectures. For example, you could argue that online classes allow students to balance school and part time jobs more easily.
 -  You would **not** want to use an argument that claims **online classes make students feel isolated**, because that argument does not logically support the opinion that online classes are beneficial.

b. Use Convincing Evidence

The support for your arguments needs to be **based on evidence**, not opinions. The following types of evidence may be used. They are listed in terms of strength from strongest to weakest.

1. Paraphrase from a source
 2. Quote from a source
 3. Personal example
- **Example:**
 - **Paraphrase (stronger):** Researchers report that college students who take online classes often improve their time-management skills because they must plan their study time independently.
 - **Personal example (weaker):** As an online student, I learned to organize my weekly schedule and meet deadlines without in-person reminders.

c. Relate to Your Readers

Your arguments should be convincing to **your specific audience**. In college writing, your audience is often **other college students**—people who are educated, used to evaluating evidence, and capable of critical thinking.

- **Example (Online Learning):**
 - If you are arguing that **online classes benefit college students**, your readers will expect more than

personal opinions. Instead of saying “*online classes are easier*,” you might explain how online courses allow students to manage heavy course loads, part-time jobs, or commuting—experiences many college students share. Using research on student performance or time management will be more persuasive to this audience.

- If your audience were **non-students or people from different educational backgrounds**, you would need to explain these college-specific experiences more carefully.

d. Be Thoughtfully Ordered

The arguments need to be **organized so you maximize their impact**. This means you need to think about how best to build your arguments.

- **Weakest → Strongest:** Some writers start with their weakest arguments and end with their strongest. This helps readers remember the strongest point and may make the opinion more convincing.
- **Strongest → Weakest:** Other writers begin with their strongest arguments to persuade readers right away. If readers agree early, they may be more open to the weaker arguments later.

2. Arguments Against Your Viewpoint (Counterarguments)

The arguments against your viewpoint are called *counterarguments* or *opposing arguments*. You should present them fairly and then show why they are less convincing than your arguments. There are **five steps** in presenting and refuting an opposing argument.

Step 1: Problematization (Introduce the Opposing View's Side)

You must make it clear that the counterarguments are not your arguments. Use special language to introduce them so that the reader knows whose arguments they are.

Example language:

- It may be argued that...

- Some people believe that...
- Critics might argue that...
- It has been claimed that...

Step 2: Development

Your counterargument must be directly related to your main topic and focus and you must show you understand the opposing side.

Limit the number of counterarguments you discuss. For this course, choose **one strong counterargument**. Explain it briefly and clearly. Support it with some evidence to show you understand the issue. Do **not** spend too much time supporting the opposing view.

Step 3: Acknowledgement / Concession

Show that the counterargument has some merit, but do not agree with it completely. The objective is to show that you have looked at both sides and believe your argument is correct and the counterargument is not.

Example language:

- This argument seems to make sense
- This argument have some validity...
- There is some truth to the point that
- It is / may / might be true that...

Step 4: Transition

Signal to the reader that your refutation is coming next.

Example language:

- However,
- Despite the claim that ...
- In fact, ...
- Yet this argument does not consider ...

Step 5: Refutation (or Rebuttal)

A refutation explains **why the counterargument is weaker than your position**. Your refutation should respond **directly** to the counterargument and cause readers to **question the truth or strength** of the opposing claim. To be effective, the counterargument should:

- Focus on the **limits or problems** in the opposing argument.
- Show readers **why your position is stronger**.
- Make sure to **not** simply repeat your pro-arguments.

In “**Me First**” and “**You First**” essays, the refutation may appear in the **same paragraph** as the counterargument or in a **separate paragraph**. This refutation is different from your main pro-arguments, which are developed elsewhere in the essay.

Watch the video, introducing you to argumentative essays

From Mallory Kirkland



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=191#oembed-1>

Key Takeaways

- Argumentative essays make **claims** that are supported by **evidence**.
- Writers must show understanding of **both sides** of the issue.
- **Pro-arguments** support your position and should be logical, evidence-based, and audience-focused.
- Evidence should be prioritized from **strongest to weakest** (sources → quotes → personal examples).
- Arguments should be **carefully ordered** for maximum impact.
- **Counterarguments** present the opposing view fairly but are followed by **refutation**.
- Refuting a counterargument involves:
 - Introducing it clearly
 - Briefly explaining it
 - Acknowledging limited validity
 - Showing why it is weaker than your argument
- Strong argumentative essays persuade readers through **clear structure, evidence, and reasoning**.

42.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION FOR ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

How to Organize an Argumentative Essay

There are **two common ways** to organize the body of an argumentative essay. Both structures are correct and effective. Writers choose between them based on their **audience** and their **topic**.

1 “You First” Organization

This structure is called “You First” because the writer **begins with the other side’s argument** and then presents their own arguments.

How it works:

- The first body paragraph explains the **main counterargument**.
- At the end of this paragraph, the writer **acknowledges** that the opposing view has some validity.
- After that, the writer presents **arguments supporting their own position**.

Why writers use it:

- To show fairness and understanding of both sides
- To persuade readers who may **disagree** with the writer at first

2 “Me First” Organization

This structure is called “**Me First**” because the writer begins with **their own arguments** and discusses the counterargument later.

How it works:

- The body starts with paragraphs that explain the writer’s **main arguments**.
- The **counterargument paragraph** comes after the writer’s arguments.
- This counterargument paragraph is developed in the **same way** as in the “You First” pattern (counterargument → acknowledgement → refutation).

Why writers use it:

- To build a strong case before introducing opposing views
- To reinforce the writer’s position for readers who may already agree

Which pattern should I use?

To choose the best organization, think about these questions:

1. What are the **strongest counterarguments** to my position?
2. What do my readers **already believe** about this topic?
3. How strongly do they feel about it?

Your answers can help you decide whether to start with their ideas (“You First”) or your ideas (“Me First”). It might be helpful to spend some time with a person or people who believe the opposite of you so that you can hear why they believe what they do or ask Generative AI what the opposing side might think.

There are three basic scenarios that typically arise:

1. Your readers are **against** your position.
2. Your readers are **for** your position.
3. Your readers are **undecided**.

Decision Chart

Use “You First” when:

- Your readers may **disagree** with you
- Your readers are **skeptical** of your opinion
- The counterargument is **strong and common**

Why: Starting with the other side shows fairness and builds trust. Readers may be more open to your arguments afterward.

Use “Me First” when:

- Your readers **agree** with you or mostly agree
- Your readers are **undecided**
- You want to build a strong case first

Why: Starting with your arguments helps readers understand your position before you address opposing views.

Patterns of Organization

Me First Pattern

1. Introduction
2. Body
 1. Argument 1
 2. Argument 2
 3. Counterargument
 4. Refutation (=Argument 3)
3. Conclusion

You First Pattern

1. Introduction
2. Body
 1. Counterargument
 2. Refutation (= Argument 1)
 3. Argument 2
 4. Argument 3
3. Conclusion

Using Web-Based Tools Effectively

Web-based tools can support identifying counterarguments when used responsibly.

Generative AI can support your understanding of **how to organize an argumentative essay**—especially when deciding between the **You First** and **Me First** patterns—*when used responsibly*.

AI can support your thinking by:

- Helping you decide **which pattern fits** your topic and audience
- Clarifying when writers choose one pattern over the other
- Helping you think through how your readers might respond

Example Prompts

- Does the order of my paragraphs make sense for my audience of undergraduate students?
- Where does my organization feel confusing or out of order?
- If my readers might disagree with me, should I start with the counterargument? Why or why not?
- If my readers mostly agree with me, does my current structure support that?

What AI Should NOT Do

-  Write your essay or outline for you
-  Decide which pattern you must use
-  Replace your own reasoning about your audience

⚠ **Important:** AI can oversimplify or misunderstand your assignment. Always confirm organizational advice with your course materials and your instructor.

Key Takeaways

- Argumentative essays follow **clear organization patterns**.
- There are **two main body structures**: You First and Me First.
 - **You First** starts with counterarguments, then presents your arguments.
 - **Me First** starts with your arguments, then addresses counterarguments.
- Good organization helps make your argument **clear and persuasive**.

43.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS STATEMENTS FOR ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

Research Questions (RQ) for Argumentative Essays

A research question guides your research. RQs help you identify sources and locate appropriate information in your sources (and ignore information that may be irrelevant) during the research process. As you read, you will become familiar with the topic and the answers to your research question. Once you have found the answers (the evidence), you can formulate your thesis statement and identify supporting ideas.

Effective Research Questions are:

- **Clear:** Provide enough information to convey the writer's purpose.
- **Narrowed:** Limited to the amount and type of information that can be included in the writing.
- **Arguable:** The answers to the question are debatable and not simply accepted facts.

Examples:

Research Question	Possible answers (= thesis statements)
1. What are the most important benefits of requiring international university students to have an American roommate in the dorms?	International students benefit from having an American roommate in three main ways: A, B, and C. Universities should require international students to have an American roommate because A, B, and C.
2. What happens when instructors use collaborative projects in undergraduate university content classes?	Undergraduate university students retain content more effectively if they participate in collaborative projects for three main reasons: A, B, and C. It is advisable for instructors to use collaborative projects to promote academic success in undergraduates because A, B, and C.
3. Should children under ten years old be allowed to use social networking sites?	The use of social networking sites by young children harms their development by A, B, and C. Parents should restrict the use of social networking sites for children under ten because A, B, and C.
4. Are current recommended guidelines restricting the use of screen time for children under 10 effective?	The recommended guidelines limiting screen use for children under ten have been ineffective because A, B, and C.
5. What impacts does the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have on developing countries? Or, How does the IMF impact developing countries?	Through its structural adjustment programs and fiscal and monetary policies, the IMF undermines labor rights, educational opportunities, and the health of people in developing countries.

What are the Criteria of an Argumentative Thesis Statement?

An effective thesis statement for an argumentative essay should:

1. **Be debatable.** Reasonable people can disagree with your claim.
2. **Clearly state an opinion.** Avoid statements which are vague or lack a position.
3. **Be supported by evidence.** Claims based on value systems or religious beliefs cannot be effectively supported with evidence.
4. **Be narrowed.** A narrowed claim will be more persuasive and is easier to support.

Knowledge Check



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=200#b5p-24>

Thesis statements: Arguments or reports?

An argumentative essay expresses a position, or opinion, on the topic; it does not merely summarize or report on information. In the list below notice the language used to express a position:

- International students **benefit from** ...
- Universities **should require** ...
- Undergraduate university students **retain content more effectively** ...
- **It is advisable** for instructors to ...
- The use of social networking sites by young children **harms** their development ...
- Parents **should restrict** ...
- The recommended guidelines limiting screen use for children under ten **have been ineffective** ...

In the examples below, note the difference between an “argument” and a “report.”

- REPORT:
 - RQ: What are the negative consequences of alcohol addiction?
 - Thesis statement: Alcohol addiction leads to family problems, job loss, and health issues. *(Here, the writer simply lists the impacts.)*
- ARGUMENT:
 - RQ: Should the legal age for drinking be lowered from 21 to 18?
 - Thesis statement: The legal age for drinking should not be lowered to 18 because of three risks: drunk driving, alcohol poisoning, and violent behavior. *(Here, the writer states their opinion by rec-*

ommending a call for action.)

- BUT: Argument:
 - RQ: What are the negative consequences of alcohol addiction?
 - Thesis statement: The most important impacts of alcohol addiction on family problems are job loss, and health issues. *(Here, the writer has included their evaluation of the many problems by selecting the three most important.)*

Adapted from Carlock et al (2010), *The ESL Writer's Handbook*

Writing a Good Research Question

Watch the video below to learn how to write a research question for an argumentative essay.

From ARC Library



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=200#oembed-1>

Using your RQ to Brainstorm Key Words for Research

Once you have your research question, you can begin conducting Internet and database research. Watch the video below to learn strategies for brainstorming “key words” from your RQ.

From Oslis Elementary Videos



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=200#oembed-2>

Using Generative AI for Writing a Research Question

Below are prompts for writing a research question

You should begin writing a research question for your topic yourself. Grappling with the writing process builds your critical thinking skills.

Research Question Prompts

- Here is my narrowed topic: [topic]. Help me write one research question using *how* or *should*.
- Can someone disagree with this research question? If not, how can I change it?
- Does this question ask for opinions and reasons, not just facts?

Key Takeaways

Type your key takeaways here.

- A **research question (RQ)** guides your research and focus.
- Good RQs are **clear, narrow, and arguable**.
- Answers to RQs often become **thesis statements**.
- An **argumentative thesis** states a **clear, debatable opinion**.
- Strong theses are **specific** and **supported by evidence**.
- Argumentative essays **take a position**, not just report facts.

44.

COUNTERARGUMENT AND REFUTATION DEVELOPMENT

Building Strong Arguments: Using Counterarguments and Refutations

In an argumentative essay, you need to convince your audience that your opinion is the most valid opinion. To do so, your essay needs to be balanced—it needs an **opposing** (opposite) viewpoint, known as a **counterargument**. Even though you are arguing *one* side of an issue, you must include what someone from the *other* side would say. After your opponent's view, include a **refutation** to demonstrate why the other point of view is wrong.

Including the other side shows that you understand the issue and have thought carefully about different views.

How to Find Counterarguments

There are many ways to identify alternative perspectives.

- Have an imaginary dialogue with a **"devil's advocate."**
- **Discuss** your topic with a classmate or group of classmates.
- **Interview someone** who holds the opposite opinion.
- **Read about** the topic to learn more about different perspectives.
- Use **AI tools** to ask: "What are arguments against this idea?" AI can help you see common opposing views, but you should always check the ideas with real sources.

Key Terms

- **Pro-Argument:** your opinion and reasons
- **Counterargument:** the opposite opinion
- **Concession:** admitting that the other side has some good points
- **Refutation (or Rebuttal or Counterclaim):** your response to the counterargument

Example Argument

In the conversation below the writer talks to someone with the opposite opinion. Roberto thinks professors should incorporate Instagram into their teaching. Fatima argues the opposing side. This discussion helps the writer identify a counterargument.

Topic: Should professors use Instagram in their classes?

Roberto: I think professors should incorporate Instagram into their teaching. Students could connect with each other in and out of the classroom. (*Position and pro-argument*)

Fatima: Hmm... that could work, but I don't think it's a very good idea. Not all students use Instagram. Some students don't want to create accounts and share their private information. (*Counter-argument*)

Roberto: Well.... students could create an account that's just for the course.

Fatima: Maybe, but some students won't want to use their personal accounts and would find it troublesome to create an additional "temporary class account." Plus, I think more young people prefer Tic Toc.

Example Counterargument Paragraph

Roberto used information from the conversation and evidence from sources to write the **counterargument paragraph**. This paragraph concludes with a *concession of validity* and is followed by the **refutation**.

Some students do not think that professors should force students to use Facebook for class purposes. In fact, not all students have Facebook accounts. According to the Pew Research Center, 80% of college students have Instagram accounts (Greenwood, 2016, p. 23). The remaining 20% of students might not be willing to create a temporary one in order to friend their classmates. Moreover, student preferences for social media are changing. The Pew Research Center also reports that teens are less interested in Facebook and sharing with strangers than in the past, and more interested in using Tic Toc with a smaller number of followers (Madden et al, 2013, p. 412). This trend further suggests that Instagram is not a recommended platform for fostering student connections. *There may be some truth to these claims.*

Example Refutation Paragraph

After the counterargument, the writer responds with a refutation.

However, teachers can replicate an Instagram type of experience within Canvas without requiring students to create an account. In the same way that Facebook users post content, such as text and photos, instructors can create Canvas Discussions where students post memes or gifs instead of personal content *Refutation continues.*

Counterarguments and Refutations in Five Steps

Use these steps when writing your counterargument and refutation section.

Step 1: State the Counterargument. Identify the opposing view's perspective.

- Critics (might) argue that ...
- Some concerned citizens believe/think/feel that ...
- Some experts believe that ... / Experts claim ...
- It could be argued / claimed that ...
- It has been argued that ...

Step 2: Develop the counterargument. *Explain the opposing view's side.*

Step 3: Acknowledge (or concede to) the opposing view's side. *Explain the opposing view's side. Also known as concession.*

- This argument seems to make sense.
- This argument has some validity.

- It may/might be true that ...
- There is some truth to this argument.

Step 4: Transition to the Refutation. *Signal that you are switching back to your own argument.*

- However, ...
- Nevertheless, ...
- Despite these claims, ...
- However, it may not be entirely true that ...

Step 5: Develop the Refutation. *Explain why your argument is still stronger.*

- This argument is weak because ...
- Even though this is true, ...
- This concern can be solved by

Using Web-Based Tools Effectively

Web-based tools can support identifying counterarguments when used responsibly.

You may use generative AI to help you **identify counterarguments** for your argumentative essay.

AI can support your thinking by:

- Suggesting **common opposing views** on a topic
- Helping you see **arguments you may not have considered**
- Explaining **why some people disagree** with your position

Example Prompts for identifying counter arguments

- What are common arguments against *[your position]*?
- What might someone who disagrees with me say about *[topic]*?
- List possible counterarguments to the claim that *[claim]*.
- Explain one opposing view of *[topic]* in simple language.

Example Prompts for identifying checking development and logic

- Are my transitions clear when I move from counterargument to refutation?
- Does my refutation clearly respond to the counterargument?
- Is my counterargument paragraph fully developed (counterargument → acknowledgement → refutation)

Use these ideas to help you **think**, not to copy.

What AI Should NOT Do

- ❌ Decide your opinion for you
- ❌ Write your counterargument paragraph
- ❌ Replace reading real sources
- ❌ Be used without checking the information

⚠ **Important:** AI can make mistakes or give incomplete information. Always **confirm counterarguments with course readings, library sources, or credible websites** before using them in your essay.

Watch this video

The video refers to counterarguments as “counterclaims” and refutations as “rebuttals.”

From Karen Baxley



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=202#oembed-1>

Key Takeaways

- A strong argumentative essay includes **both your position and an opposing view**.
- A **counterargument** explains what people who disagree with you might say.
- A **refutation** explains why your argument is still stronger.
- **Conceding some validity** to the opposing view can make your argument more persuasive.
- Use **clear transitions** to help readers follow your ideas

45.

LOGICAL FALLACIES

Avoiding Logical Fallacies in Academic Writing

A **logical fallacy** is a mistake in thinking. It happens when an argument does not use good logic.

When you write an argument, you want readers to agree with you. To do this, your **reasons** and **conclusions** need to make sense. If your ideas are not logical, readers may not trust your argument or take it seriously.

Strong logic helps you:

- explain your own ideas clearly
- question weak or incorrect ideas
- sometimes even change a reader's opinion

If you use **faulty logic** (logic that is not based on facts or reasonable thinking), readers may stop believing your argument.

Below are **five of the most common logical fallacies** to look for and how to avoid them.

1. Generalizations
2. Loaded words
3. Inappropriate authority figures
4. Either/or arguments
5. Slippery slope

Common Logical Fallacies

#1 Generalizations

Explanation: Hasty generalizations are just what they sound like—making quick judgments based on inadequate information. This kind of logical fallacy is a common error in argumentative writing.

Example 1: *Ren didn't want to study at a university. Instead, Ren decided to go to a technical school. Ren is now making an excellent salary repairing computers. Luis doesn't want to study at a university. Therefore, Luis should go to a technical school to become financially successful.*

Analysis: While they have something in common (they both want to go to school and earn a high salary), this fact alone does not mean Luis would be successful doing the same thing that their friend Ren did. There may be other specific information which is important as well, such as the fact that Ren has lots of experience with computers or that Luis has different skills.

Example 2: *If any kind of gun control laws are enacted, citizens will not be allowed to have any guns at all.*

Analysis: While passing new gun control laws may result in new restrictions, it is highly unlikely the consequences would be so extreme; gun control is a complex issue and each law that may be passed would have different outcomes. Words such as “all,” “always,” “never,” “everyone,” “at all” are problematic because they cannot be supported with evidence. Consider making less sweeping and more modest conclusions.

Suggestions for Avoiding Generalizations

Replace “absolute” expressions with more “softening” expressions.

- Replace words like “all” or “everyone” with “most people.” Instead of “no one” use “few people.”
- Replace “always” with “typically” or “usually” or “often.”
- Replace “never” with “rarely” or “infrequently” or the “to be verb” + “unlikely.”
- Replace “will” with “may or might or could” or use the “to be verb” + “likely.”

Example 1 revised: *Luis **could** consider going to a technical school. This education track is **more likely to lead** to financial success.*

Example 2 revised: ***If** extensive gun control laws are enacted, **some** citizens **may** feel their constitutional rights are being limited.*

#2 Loaded Words

Explanation: Some words contain positive or negative connotations, which may elicit a positive or negative emotional response. Try to avoid them in academic writing when making an argument because your arguments should be based on reason (facts and evidence), not emotions. In fact, using these types of words may cause your reader to react against you as the writer, rather than being convincing as you hoped. Therefore they can make your argument actually weaker rather than stronger.

Example 1: *It is widely accepted by **reasonable people** that free-trade has a positive effect on living standards, although some people **ignorantly disagree** with this.*

Analysis: The words “**reasonable**” (positive) and “**ignorantly**” (negative) may bias the readers about the two groups without giving any evidence to support this bias.

Example 2: *This decision is **outrageous** and has **seriously** jeopardized the financial futures for the majority of **innocent** citizens.*

Analysis: The words “**outrageous**,” “**seriously**,” and “**innocent**” appeal to readers’ emotions in order to persuade them more easily. However, the most persuasive arguments in academic writing will be supported with evidence instead of drawing on emotions.

Suggestions for Avoiding Loaded Words

Choose appropriate vocabulary.

- Omit adjectives and adverbs, especially if they carry emotion, value, or judgment.
- Replace/add softeners like, “potentially” or modals like “might” or “may.”

Example 1 revised: *It is widely accepted by **many** people that free-trade **may** have a positive effect on living standards, although **some** people **may** disagree with this.*

Example 2 revised: *This decision has **potentially** serious consequences for the financial futures for **the majority** of citizens.*

#3 Inappropriate authority figures

Explanation: Using famous names may or may not help you prove your point. However, be sure to use the name logically and in relation to their own area of authority.

Example 1: ***Albert Einstein**, one of the fathers of atomic energy, was a vegetarian and believed that animals deserved to be treated fairly. In short, animal testing should be banned.*

Analysis: While Einstein is widely considered one of the great minds of the 20th century, **he was a physicist**, not an expert in animal welfare or ethics.

Example 2: *Nuclear power is claimed to be safe because there is very little chance for an accident to happen, but little chance does not have the same meaning as safety. **Riccio** (2013), a **news reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal**, holds a strong opinion against the use of nuclear energy and constructions of nuclear power plants because he believes that the safety features do not meet the latest standards.*

Analysis: In order to provide strong evidence to support the claim regarding the safety features of nuclear power plants, **expert opinion is needed**; the profession of a reporter does not provide sufficient expertise to validate the claim.

Suggestions for Avoiding Inappropriate Authority Figures

Replace inappropriate authority figures with credible experts.

- Read through your sources and look for examples of experts. Pay attention to their **credentials**. (See examples below.)
- Find new sources written by or citing legitimate experts in the field.
- Google the authority figure you wish to use to determine if they are an expert in the field. Use the Library Databases to locate a substantive or scholarly article related to your topic. Cite the author of one of these articles or use an indirect citation to cite an expert mentioned in the article.

Example 1 revised: Kitty Block, **president and CEO of the Humane Society of the U.S.**, emphasizes the need for researchers to work with international governments and agencies to follow new guidelines to protect animals and minimize their use in animal testing.

Example 2 revised: Edwin Lyman, **senior scientist of the Global Security Program**, points out that while the U.S. has severe-accident management programs, these plans are not evaluated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and therefore may be subject to accidents or sabotage.

#4 Either/Or Arguments

Explanation: When you argue a point, be careful not to limit the choices to only two or three. This needs to be qualified.

Example 1: *Studying abroad **either** increases job opportunities **or** causes students to become depressed.*

Analysis: This statement implies that only two things may happen, whereas in reality these are two among many possible outcomes.

Example 2: *People can continue to spend countless amounts of tax dollars fighting the use of a relatively safe drug, **or** they can make a change, legalize marijuana, and actually see a tax and revenue benefit for our state.* (owl.excelsior.edu)

Analysis: Most issues are very complex and hardly ever either/or, i.e. they rarely have only two opposing ways of looking at them or two possible outcomes. Instead, use language that acknowledges the complexity of the issue.

Suggestions for Avoiding Either/Or Arguments

Offer more than one or two choices, options, or outcomes.

- If relevant for your essay focus, offer more than one or two choices, options, or outcomes.
- Acknowledge that multiple outcomes or perspectives exist.

Example 1 revised: Studying abroad may have a **wide spectrum of outcomes, both** positive **and** negative, **from** increasing job opportunities **to** leading to financial debt and depression.

Example 2 revised: There are **a number of solutions** for mitigating the illegal sale of marijuana, **including** legalizing the use of the drug in a wider range of contexts, increasing education about the drug and its use, and creating legal businesses for the sale, **among other business related solutions.**

#5 Slippery Slope

Explanation: When you argue that a chain reaction will take place, i.e. say that one problem may lead to a greater problem, which in turn leads to a greater problem, often ending in serious consequences. This way of arguing exaggerates and distorts the effects of the original choice. If the series of events is extremely improbable, your arguments will not be taken seriously.

Example 1: *Animal experimentation reduces society's respect for life. If people don't respect life, they are likely to be more and more tolerant of violent acts like war and murder. Soon **society will become a battlefield in which everyone constantly fears for their lives.***

Analysis: This statement implies that allowing animal testing shows a moral problem which can lead to completely different, greater outcomes: war, death, the end of the world! Clearly an exaggeration.

Example 2: *If stricter gun control laws are enacted, the right of citizens to own guns may be greatly restricted, which may limit their ability to defend themselves against terrorist attacks. When that happens, the number of terrorist attacks in this country may increase. Therefore, gun control laws **may result in higher probability of widespread terrorism.** (owl.excelsior.edu)*

Analysis: The issue of gun control is exaggerated to lead into a very different issue. Check your arguments to make sure any chains of consequences are reasonable and still within the scope of your focused topic. (writingcenter.unc.edu)

Suggestions for Avoiding Slippery Slope

Think through the chain of events.

- Carefully think about the chain of events and know when to stop to make sure these events are still within the narrowed focus of your essay.

Example 1 revised: If animal experimentation is not limited, an increasing number of animals will likely continue to be hurt or killed as a result of these experiments.

Example 2 revised: With stricter gun laws, the number of citizens who are able to obtain firearms may be reduced, which could lead to fewer deaths involving guns.

As you read your own work, imagine you are reading the draft for the first time. Look carefully for any instances of faulty logic and then use the tips above to eliminate the logical fallacies in your writing.

Apply: Practice Spotting Logical Fallacies

Activity #1: Analyze the paragraph on College Life below

1. Read the paragraph below.
2. Identify **four logical fallacies**.
3. Revise **one sentence** to remove the logical fallacy.

College life is stressful for everyone because students are always overwhelmed with homework and exams. If a student decides to take a part-time job while in college, their grades will definitely suffer, and soon they will fail out of school completely. Most smart students agree that working during the school

year is a terrible idea, even though a few lazy students think it helps them manage their time better. Clearly, students must choose between having a social life or doing well academically. It is impossible to have both.

Activity #2: Analyze your writing

1. Read your essay draft carefully. Highlight **one sentence or idea** that may include a logical fallacy.
2. Decide **which type of logical fallacy** it might be (for example: generalization, either/or, loaded words). Rewrite the sentence by **softening extreme language** or adding more precise wording.
3. With a partner, explain:
 1. What fallacy did you find?
 2. How did you revise it?

Generative AI Tools for Avoiding Logical Fallacies

Web-based tools can help you avoid logical fallacies when used responsibly.

You may use generative AI to help you **check your reasoning and avoid logical fallacies** in your argumentative essay.

AI can support your writing by:

- Helping you identify **possible logical fallacies** in a claim
- Explaining **why an argument may be too weak, too general, or too extreme**
- Suggesting **questions** you should ask about your argument
- Helping you **rephrase overly strong claims** in a more careful way

Example Prompts

- Does this claim include a logical fallacy? Why or why not?
- Is this argument too general or too certain?
- What logical fallacy might appear in this statement: *[paste sentence]*
- How can I revise this sentence to avoid a logical fallacy?

Use AI to **check and reflect**, not to replace your thinking.

What AI Should NOT Do

- ❌ Identify fallacies instead of you doing the analysis
- ❌ Rewrite your argument for you
- ❌ Replace learning the fallacies from class materials
- ❌ Be trusted without checking

⚠️ **Important:** AI explanations can be unclear, incomplete, or incorrect. Always **confirm fallacy definitions and revisions** using your textbook, class notes, or instructor feedback.

Key Takeaways

- Logical fallacies are mistakes in reasoning.
- Logical fallacies weaken arguments and reduce credibility.
- Common fallacies include generalizations, loaded words, and either/or thinking.
- Using careful language and evidence strengthens your writing.
- Good readers — and writers — always question logic.

For more logical fallacies, watch this video

From GCFLearnFree.org



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=209#oembed-1>

Source consulted

Great Essays, by Keith S. Folse, April Muchmore-Vokoun, Elena Vestri Solomon, published by Houghton Mifflin, 2003

46.

HEDGING

Using Hedging in Academic Writing

Good writers think about **how their arguments sound** to readers. Ask yourself:

- Is my argument **too strong**?
- Is it **too certain**?
- Do I allow space for other ideas?

One way to control the tone of your writing is by using **hedging**. This chapter introduces **hedging**, a key skill in academic writing. You will practice it now and learn more about it in ESL 118.

What is hedging?

Hedging means using **careful, cautious language**. Writers use hedging to:

- avoid sounding too certain
- show that ideas are based on **limited evidence**
- express uncertainty in a responsible way

Hedging is especially important when explaining research, interpreting evidence, and discussing results or possible effects.

Compare these two examples:

No hedging language	Hedging language
The research results clearly show that in order to feel happier and less homesick, international students must spend more time with friends from the host country than their home countries.	The research results indicate that in order to feel happier and less homesick, international students may benefit from spending more time with friends from the host country than their home countries.

The second example sounds more **careful**, **academic**, and **credible**.

Why is hedging important?

Hedging makes you sound more credible

- Hedging is important to appear more credible and not too overconfident. As a writer, you should be more cautious about the language you use and more critical about the claims you make because your points are based on a limited number of sources you have read on your topic, and therefore, there may be flaws in your argumentation.
- When you use hedging, you show your readers that you are aware of these flaws, which will reduce the possibility of your arguments being criticized.

Hedging reduces disagreement

- Using hedges makes it much more difficult for someone with an opposing view to argue with a statement. For example, compare these statements:
 -  *People prefer black clothing to red clothing.*
 -  *In general, many people seem to prefer black clothing to red clothing.*
- The first statement is an overstatement, since it is easy to find someone who likes red clothes better. Yet the second sentence allows exceptions and there will be less disagreement.

Hedging follows academic writing conventions

- The use of hedging also conforms to the conventions of academic writing. In academic writing, writers avoid absolute claims and instead use careful language. Evidence is interpreted, not announced as final truth.

Hedging Types

Type	Language	Examples using hedging
Modal verbs	<i>may, might, could, should</i>	- Students may benefit from smaller class sizes. - This policy could improve access to education.
Verbs of moderation	<i>appear, suggest, indicate, tend to + verb, seem to + verb</i>	- The data suggest that test scores are increasing. - Online learners tend to prefer flexible schedules.
Adverbs	<i>somewhat, perhaps, possibly, probably, generally, typically, frequently, often, evidently, relatively</i>	- College students often experience stress during exams. - High acceptance rates generally mean fewer requirements
Adjectives	<i>likely, unlikely, possible, probable, some, many, most</i>	- It is possible that diet affects mood. Many students prefer in-person classes.

Tips for Hedging

ADD hedging to strong verbs

- Children living in poverty **do** poorly in school. ⇒ Children living in poverty **tend to do** poorly in school.
- The data collected from this study **show** that... ⇒ The data collected from this study **seem to show** that...
- The number of students interested in online learning **will increase**. ⇒ The number of students interested in online learning **will probably increase**.

REPLACE absolute language with hedged language

- Inflation **is** the cause of... ⇒ Inflation **may be** the main cause of...
- A blended mode of learning **will solve** this problem. ⇒ A blended mode of learning **is likely to solve** this problem.
- Without asynchronous courses, students always **have to take** classes at midnight. ⇒ Without asynchronous courses, students **often have to take** classes at midnight.

Knowledge Check



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=342#h5p-25>

Apply: Improve the Tone of Your Writing

Activity #1: Analyze the paragraph on College Life below

1. Read the paragraph below.
2. Identify **four places** where the language is **too strong or too certain** and needs hedging.
3. Revise **one sentence** to make it more cautious and academic using hedging words (for example: *may*, *might*, *often*, *tend to*, *appears*, *likely*).

College students experience high levels of stress because they have too many assignments and exams. This stress causes students to perform poorly in all of their classes. Living on campus is the best option for students because it always leads to better academic performance and social success. Students who commute struggle more and do not get involved on campus. Clearly, taking easier classes is the only way for students to maintain their mental health.

Activity #2: Analyze your writing

1. Read your essay draft carefully. Highlight **one sentence or idea** that sounds very strong or certain
2. Add hedging by:
 1. using a modal verb (may, might, could)
 2. replacing an absolute word (always → often, or words like “many, generally, some”)
 3. adding a hedging verb (suggest, seem to, tend to)
3. With a partner, explain:
 1. What change did you make?
 2. Does your sentence sound more credible and academic now?

Generative AI Tools for Using Hedging in Academic Writing

Web-based tools can support academic reading and writing **when used responsibly**.

You may use generative AI to help you **apply hedging** to your argumentative essay and avoid language that sounds too strong or too certain.

AI can support your writing by:

- Helping you identify sentences that sound **too strong or absolute**
- Suggesting **hedging words or phrases** (for example: *may, tends to, likely, generally*)
- Explaining **why a claim needs hedging**
- Helping you revise a sentence to sound **more careful and academic**

Example Prompts

- Is this sentence too strong for academic writing?
- How can I add hedging to this sentence: *[paste sentence]*
- Which hedging words could I use in this claim?
- Rewrite this sentence to sound more cautious and academic.

Use AI suggestions to **learn and revise**, not to copy directly.

What AI Should NOT Do

- ❌ Rewrite your whole paragraph or essay
- ❌ Decide how strong your argument should be
- ❌ Replace learning hedging from class materials
- ❌ Be trusted without reviewing the changes

⚠️ **Important:** AI suggestions may not always fit your meaning or your assignment. Always **check that the hedging is accurate, logical, and appropriate**, and confirm with your textbook, instructor feedback, or course examples.

Key Takeaways

- Hedging means using **careful, cautious language**.
- It helps writers avoid sounding too certain or overconfident.
- Hedging is important when discussing research and evidence.
- Common hedges include **may, suggest, generally, and likely**.
- Academic writing values careful claims over strong opinions

Watch this introductory video

From Engago



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=342#oembed-1>

Source consulted

[Hedges: Softening Claims in Academic Writing](#)

PART VII

UNIT 7: DOCUMENTATION

In this Unit

- Understanding the fundamentals of APA formatting
- Learning how to write citations
- Learning how to write references

47.

DOCUMENTATION: CITING YOUR SOURCES USING APA STYLE

Introduction to APA Style

Whenever you include someone else's ideas in your own writing, whether you are quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing those ideas, you must let the reader know where you took those ideas from by citing your sources. Even if you use your own words, if you obtained the information or ideas from a source, you must document the source.

There are three main reasons to cite your sources

1. To avoid plagiarism.
2. To let the reader know that you have carefully researched your ideas.
3. To inform the reader where to find the original source if they want to learn more about your topic.

There are a number of commonly used documentation styles. In this course, we will use the **APA ([American Psychological Association](#)) formatting style**. Business, engineering, and the social sciences use APA style, while the humanities fields often use MLA (Modern Language Association) style. The life sciences fields use CBE (Council of Biology Editors). If you are unsure of which style to use, ask your instructor.

Where can APA documentation be found in an essay?

APA Documentation can be found in two different places in a piece of academic writing:

1. **in-text citations**, within the text
2. **references** at the end of the essay

Why are **citations** important? A **citation** tells the reader ...

- ...that the idea does not belong to the essay writer, but to the source's author.
- ...which source on the **reference list** the idea comes from.

A **reference list** is a complete listing of all outside sources used in a piece of academic writing. The reference list can be found on the last page of an essay or article.

What do APA citations and references look like?

Study the two citation examples below. Then study the references following the paragraph below.

A **citation** looks like this: (author's last name, year of publication, page number)

(Perrin, 2015, p. 1)

If the author is not provided, substitute the name of the article for the author's last name.

("Millennials Smile for Snapchat," 2015, p. 1)

How do citations and references work together?

Notice the citations in the paragraph and how they relate to, but differ in format from, the references:

Use of social networks has increased in the last several years. Teens especially account for a dramatic

increase. According to the 2015 Pew Research Center study, 90% of young people use social media (Perrin, 2015, p.1). This number suggests the wide impact SNS can have on young people. Most people know about Facebook and Instagram, but other SNS are being created every day. For example, Yik Yak, has millions more active users since its 2013 launch (Shontell, 2015, p. 1). Another popular network, Snapchat, has experienced rapid growth, with 45% of its users being 18-24 years old (“Millennials Smile for Snapchat,” 2015, p. 1). The evidence seems to show that young people are more likely to try using new SNS.

References (*in your essay, these should be double-spaced, and the second lines of each reference will be indented**.* This style of indentation is called “hanging indentation”.)

Millennials smile for Snapchat. (2015, April 8). *e-marketer*. <http://mediavataarme.com/index.php/industry-news/digital/item/3815-millennials-smile-for-snapchat>

Perrin, A. (2015). Social media usage: 2005-2015. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 2(4), 47-50. <https://www.thejsms.org>

Shontell, A. (2015, March 12). How 2 Georgia fraternity brothers created Yik Yak. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/the-inside-story-of-yik-yak-2015-3>

How to Cite Generative AI

The standards for citing AI tools are still evolving. It is important that you confirm your instructor’s expectations for both using AI and documenting that use.

To learn more about how to cite your use of AI Tools see the [UW Libraries’ Research Guides on Citing Generative AI](#).

Introduction to APA Style

Note that in this course you will NOT include a cover page as described in the video below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=215#h5p-8>

From Excelsior Online Writing Lab, [APA Style](#)

48.

CITATIONS

Citation Formats

There are many different formats for citations, so it's helpful to use a guide. The examples below are some of the most common formats, but for a complete list, see the [Writing Center's APA Handbook](#). (Notice that some portions of the Handbook state that they are using APA edition 6 still rather than edition 7.)

In-Text Citations: Within the Sentence & At the End of a Sentence

When you include a paraphrase or quotation from an outside source in your writing, you need to acknowledge the source. This is referred to as citing the source. Some teachers may refer to this as attributing the source, or source attribution.

In-text citations include:

1. The author's name (if known) or the article title (if the author's name is unknown).
2. The date of publication.
3. The page or paragraph number (required for quotations), BUT in 117 we require it in all instances.

In-text citation for a source with a known author

These citations include the author's last name, publication date, and the page or paragraph number where the information was found.

Citing your source within the sentence (also known as a "narrative citation" or "writer focused citation")

- Baker (2017) reports that 70% of Instagram users are under 35 years old (p. 1).

Citing your source at the end of a sentence (also known as a “parenthetical citation” or “idea focused citation”)

- Seventy percent of Instagram users are under 35 years old (Baker, 2017, p. 1).

Citations within the sentence focus on the person, while *those at the end of a sentence* focus more on the idea. We can therefore infer that:

- **Citations within the sentence** may be more **appropriate for experts or scholarly article authors**.
- **Citations at the end of a sentence** are preferable when citing information from **newspaper article authors** (although it may be acceptable to use citations with the sentence when such authors are very well known and/or considered authorities on the subject and/or if they draw important conclusions).

Direct Quotations

If you use a quotation, you must:

1. Put the EXACT words within **quotation marks**.
2. Include the page number or paragraph number.
3. Put the period OUTSIDE the parentheses.

Quotation within the sentence

- Gambino (2015) states, “Students come to depend on social networks more than face-to-face interactions, and this may limit their interpersonal skills” (para. 3).

Quotation at the end of a sentence

- “Students come to depend on social networks more than face-to-face interactions, and this may limit their interpersonal skills” (Gambino, 2015, para. 3).

In-text citation for a source with an unknown author

Use the title of the source if the author's name is unknown.

1. Put quotation marks around the title for an article or webpage. Underline the title of a book.
2. Include the date of publication.
3. Use the full title the first time you include the citation. In subsequent citations, use only the first 2-4 words of the title.

Citing your source within the sentence

- In the article “Higher Education in the United States Today” (2015), the author claims that most students have earned Advanced Placement credits before entering college (p. 4).

Citing your source at the end of a sentence

- Most students have earned Advanced Placement credits before entering college (“Higher Education in the United States Today,” 2015, p. 4). **(PREFERRED METHOD)**

Subsequent citation (use an abbreviated form of the title)

- Most students have earned Advanced Placement credits before entering college (“Higher Education,” 2015, p. 4).

In-text citation for source with multiple authors

These citations need to include the authors' last names, the date of publication, and the page/paragraph number on which the information was found. If the source has two authors, both authors' last names must be included.

Two authors (cited within the sentence): List the authors in the original order as they appear in the source.

- Grant and Moore (2017) note that eating a healthy breakfast and getting sufficient sleep before an exam can improve students' academic test taking performance (p. 3).

Two authors (cited at the end of the sentence): Use an ampersand (&) when using end-of-sentence format.

- Eating a healthy breakfast and getting sufficient sleep before an exam can improve students' academic test taking performance (Grant & Moore, 2017, p. 3).

If the source has three or more authors, use only the first author's last name followed by "et al." for all citations. (If doing that causes confusion with another similar source, there is an extra rule; you can look it up online by searching for "APA edition 7 in-text citation multiple authors".)

Three or more authors (cited within the sentence): Include the first author's name and replace the other authors' names with "et al."

- Chase et al. (2015) report that blue light emitted from electronic devices disrupts sleep patterns (p. 5).

At the end of the sentence, include the first author's name and replace the other authors' names with "et al."

- Research has shown that blue light emitted from electronic devices disrupts sleep patterns (Chase et al., 2015, p. 5).

Idea from more than one source

Sometimes you will find that multiple sources contain the same information, so it may strengthen your argument to include more than one source. To do this:

1. Use the end-of-sentence format.
2. Alphabetize the authors (A, B, C, etc.).
3. Separate the sources with a semicolon.

Multiple sources in one citation

- Students who use study groups to prepare for tests and problem sets perform better in those classes and build lasting friendships with their study mates (Easton, 2011, p. 5; Horowitz, 2012, p. 1).

Organizations as authors

Information that comes from organizations, government agencies, corporations, or some other type of group can be expressed without an author's name. To do this:

1. Include the full title of the organization the first time you use the citation. You may follow this with an abbreviation, e.g. United Nations (UN) or World Health Organization (WHO).
2. In subsequent citations, just use the abbreviation.
3. Include the year.

Organized groups as authors

- The United Nations (UN) (2007) reports that with proper infrastructure and continued financial support, children in developing countries can receive higher quality education.

Indirect sources

You will often read an article which quotes or references an expert. (In other words, this expert is *not* the author of the article you are reading.) If you want to paraphrase this information, you need to indicate who said the original information and you need to provide the details of the article you read. To do this:

1. Include the credential for the person whose ideas you are paraphrasing (or quoting).
2. Use the end-of-sentence format.

3. Include “as cited in” along with the last name of the article’s author.
4. Include the year and page number.

Indirect source

- UW psychology professor Kristin Wang claims international students with a minimum of one foreign friend adapt to college life more easily (as cited in Patel, 2016, p. 8).

A few notes about indirect sources

- Here, the author of the article is Patel, and Patel included information from Wang. Wang is not the author of the article, but if you want to use Wang’s ideas, you need to use this special format.
- The first time you use this format, include the cited author’s full name and credential. In subsequent mentions, you can simply use the family name.
 - Example: Wang goes on to say.... (as cited in Patel, 2016, p. 8).
- When citing authors of scholarly articles or citing experts mentioned in scholarly articles, do not include the full name or the credential; simply use the family name.

Webpage without an author

When there is no author for a web page, follow the directions below:

1. Put the citation at the end of the sentence in parentheses.
2. If the title is short, use the full title and put it in quotes. If the title is long, just include the first few words of the title and put it in quotes.
3. Include the year (if known) or write n.d. (for “no date”) if the date is unknown.

Webpage without an author

- More students than ever are choosing majors such as engineering and computer science since more high-paying jobs are available in these fields (“Pursuing Careers in STEM,” n.d., para. 2).

How to Cite Generative AI

The standards for citing AI tools are still evolving. It is important that you confirm your instructor’s expectations for both using AI and documenting that use.

To learn more about how to cite your use of AI Tools see the [UW Libraries’ Research Guides on Citing Generative AI](#).

Video on APA(7th Edition) Citations for an academic paper

Note that in this course you will include the page number or paragraph number for ALL information you cite, not just for quotations.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=217#b5p-15>

From Excelsior Online Writing Lab, [APA In-Text Citations](#)

49.

REFERENCES

Reference Examples

At the end of your essay, include a list of your sources in **alphabetical order**. This is usually referred to as the **Reference** section of your essay. For a more detailed list, visit the [APA website](#) or visit [Purdue OWL's website](#).

For a book with a known author

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle*. Location: Publisher.

Baxter, C. (2007). *Introduction to academic writing for undergraduate writers*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

For an online journal article, single author

Author, A. A. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume number, (issue number), page range. doi: 0000000/000000000000 or <http://dx.doi.org/10.0000/0000>

Irving, D. (2017). Processing pitch in mammals: Recent developments in cetacean research. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 12(3), 88-121.

For an online journal article, two authors

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume number, (issue number), page range. doi: 0000000/000000000000 or <http://dx.doi.org/10.0000/0000>

Larson, S.J., & Marsh, O. (2012). An integrated model for teaching ESL writing. *Second Language Writing*, 36, 88-95.

For an online journal article, three or more authors

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume number, (issue number), page range. doi: 0000000/000000000000 or <http://dx.doi.org/10.0000/0000>

Lucas, B., Moore, J., & Tanner, T. (2001). Social experimentation. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 18(4), 22-34.

For an online newspaper or magazine article, with author

Author, A. A., (Author, B. B., & Author, C. C.) (Year of publication, Month Day). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper or Magazine*. <http://url>

Lorenz, T. (2020, August 28). College is everywhere now. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/style/college-collab-houses-coronavirus.html>

For an online newspaper or magazine article, no author

Title of article. (Year of publication, Month Day). *Title of Newspaper or Magazine*. <http://url>

Younger Americans feel their voting weight. (2020, September 6). *The Economist*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/style/college-collab-houses-coronavirus.html>

For a government document

Name of government agency. (Year of publication, Month Day). *Title of document*. Publisher name. <http://url>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2009). *Anxiety disorders*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Mental Health. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>

For a corporate or group author

Name of corporation, group, or organization. (Year of publication, Month Day). *Title of page*. <http://url>

World Health Organization. (2018, May 24). *The top 10 causes of death*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>

For a webpage, with author

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). *Title of article*. Website. <http://url>

Giovanetti, F. (2019, November 16). *Why we are so obsessed with personality types*. Medium.
<https://medium.com/the-business-of-wellness/why-we-are-so-obsessed-with-personality-types-577450f9a339>

For a webpage, no author

Title. (Date of publication). Website. <http://url>

Ocean enterprise study. (n.d.). National Ocean Service. <http://www.oceanservice.noaa.gov/project/ocean-enterprise-study>

For a webpage with a retrieval date

When the information on a page changes over time, include a retrieval date.

Name of organization. (Date of publication). *Title of report/document*. Publisher. Retrieved Month date, Year from <http://url>

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *U.S. and world population clock*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved January 9, 2020, from <http://www.census.gov/popclock>

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Formatting your Reference Page

- The Reference page is a new page at the end of an essay. Put the word “References” at the top of the paper and center it.
- Alphabetize the sources (by author’s last name), A, B, C, D, etc.
- References should be left-justified. If a reference is more than one line, the subsequent lines should be indented.
- Double-space your reference page.
- **DOI** stands for “digital object identifier.”
 - This is a unique letter-number combination associated with scholarly journal articles and some other works. A DOI makes it easy for someone to find a work because they can copy it into a browser address bar.
 - Your DOI should begin with **http**. Do not put a period at the end of a DOI.
 - You can usually find a DOI with other article information at the top or bottom of an article’s first page or in a database entry for an article.
 - Include the DOI for all works that have one. It goes at the end of your reference.

Rules for Creating Reference Entries

- Put the author’s LAST name first, followed by the first initial. Example: Obama, B.
- Capitalize titles of articles and journals correctly:
 - Capitalize major words, like proper nouns.
 - Examples: **S**outh **K**orea, **E**nglish, **B**arack **O**abama, **U**nited **N**ations
 - Capitalize only the *first letter* of the *first word* of a title and subtitle, and only the *first word* after a colon or a dash in the title.
 - Example: **M**ultilingual writers: **W**riting with different voices.
- *Italicize* titles of journals, newspapers, magazines, and books.
- If the the date is unknown write n.d. (for “no date”).

Shortcuts for Creating APA References

You do not have to type your references “from scratch.” Here are some alternatives:

1. Many **databases** allow you to automatically save the reference format. In ProQuest, Academic Search, and other discipline specific databases, look for the option to “cite,” “download citation,” or “save refer-

ence” and select **APA 7th edition**.

2. **Citation machines** will “create” the reference for you after you input the source information.
3. **Citation managers** are tools which collect and organize references.

***IMPORTANT: You cannot totally rely on databases or citation machines as occasionally these tools make mistakes. Therefore, should always check the format using an APA reference guide to make sure your reference or citation is accurate.*

Tools for Creating & Organizing References

- [Citation Machine](#)
- [Bibme](#)
- [Libraries Citation Managers webpage](#)

Video on APA (7th Edition) Citations for an academic paper



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/csl117/?p=221#h5p-14>

From Excelsior Online Writing Lab, [APA References](#)

50.

APA REVIEW

Complete the knowledge check on APA (7th Edition).



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=799#b5p-13>

PART VIII

UNIT 8: ACADEMIC WRITING RESOURCES

In this Unit

- Fundamentals of and tips for effective peer response
- Tips for maintaining academic tone
- Strategies to achieving cohesion and coherence

51.

PEER RESPONSE TRAINING

Introduction to Peer Response

Peer response (or peer review) is when students read each other's drafts and give **helpful comments** to improve ideas, organization, and use of evidence before the final version is submitted.

To be effective, peer response helps writers improve their drafts *before* they reach the final submission. Good peer response involves

- identifying **important elements** to comment on
- knowing what to **focus on** and what to **ignore** at the draft stage
- framing comments so the writer **understands the problem and knows how to revise**

The following information will help you better understand what to focus on and how to respond.

What should I comment on?

What you comment on for draft one will be different for draft two. In this class, you will conduct peer review for the first drafts of your essays. Below are some guidelines for things to focus on and things to ignore in the first drafts:

What to comment on	What to ignore
thesis statement too many quotes insufficient introduction of evidence lack of connecting explanation after evidence order of main ideas relevance of evidence (title)	spelling verb tense punctuation grammar (UNLESS it makes the meaning hard to understand)

What makes comments effective?

Effective peer review comments are specific, clear, and tactful.

Quality	Less effective example	Improved example
Specific	What?? Irrelevant	The topic and focus in your thesis statement are not very clear to me. / It's difficult to identify the main point here. Could you try to make it clearer? This is a separate idea, but it might be related to another main point. Does it fit in the section?
Clear	Change your thesis. Not enough evidence.	You could express the topic more clearly and clarify supporting point number two more. Supporting point #2 seems unclear to me. Can you explain it with an example?" After this evidence, please add a sentence to explain how it proves your point. Paragraph 3 needs a source. You could use the X article to support this point.
Tactful (polite)	Your thesis is bad. This is wrong.	Your thesis could be clearer. What do you mean by ___? / I'm not quite sure what your focus is. I'm not sure what you mean by ___. Could you rephrase it? This part seems like a new idea. Should it go in paragraph ___?" This point seems unrelated to your main idea. Can you connect it or remove it? You make a strong point here. Maybe move it earlier to make the argument stronger.

AI and Peer Response: An Important Note

During peer review in this class, you should not use AI tools to comment on your classmates' drafts.

AI is not allowed for peer review in this class because:

- It shares your classmate's writing **without their permission**
- You need to practice **critical thinking** and reading skills
- Your peer deserves feedback from a **real human reader**
- AI feedback does not show **your own understanding**

During peer review you are expected to:

-  Read your peer's draft yourself
-  Give feedback in **your own words**
-  Comment as a reader ("I'm confused here...")
-  Ask questions and suggest ways to improve based on your understanding

During peer review you should avoid:

-  Copying your peer's writing into an AI tool
-  Asking AI to review or improve your peer's draft
-  Copy-pasting AI-written comments into peer review

Peer response is not about being "right" or "perfect." It is about being **thoughtful, honest, and helpful** as a reader.

Key Takeaways

- Peer response helps writers **revise and improve** their drafts.
- Focus on **ideas, organization, and evidence**, not grammar.
- What you comment on depends on the **draft stage**.
- Effective comments are **specific, clear, and polite**.
- Good feedback explains **what is unclear** and **suggests how to revise**.

52.

ACADEMIC WRITING TIPS

Academic Writing Guidelines

Academic writing is important because it helps you communicate your ideas in a clear, respectful, and professional way. Instead of sounding casual, academic writing uses formal language, precise vocabulary, and organized sentences to show careful thinking. When your tone is formal and your wording is accurate, your readers can trust your ideas and understand that your work is based on evidence, not personal opinion.

1. Pronoun Use and Inclusivity

Avoid First- and Second-Person Pronouns

First-person (*I, me, my, we*) and second-person (*you*) usually sound too personal for academic writing.

- **✗ Not appropriate:** *I think you can see that study groups help a lot.*
- **✓ Academic:** *Study groups are associated with improved course performance.*

Use Gender-Inclusive Language (Singular “they”)

When a person’s gender is unknown, use singular *they/their*. For more information, see [APA Style: Singular They](#).

- **✗ Not inclusive:** *Each student must upload his homework by Friday.*
- **✓ Inclusive:** *Each student must upload their homework by Friday.*

2. Precision and Clarity

Avoid Vague Generalizers (“etc.,” “and so on”) and Ellipses (...)

Expressions such as “etc.” and “and so on” are imprecise. Use “and other [...],” filling in the blank with a noun that identifies the type of items being listed.

- **✗ Imprecise:** *The survey asked about study habits such as reading, reviewing notes, completing practice problems, etc.*
- **✓ Precise:** *The survey asked about study habits such as reading, reviewing notes, completing practice problems, and other common learning activities.*

Avoid Absolutes and Superlatives

Words like *all*, *every*, *never*, *always*, *absolutely* and phrases like *the most* [...] leave no room for exceptions and may overstate claims. See the [chapter on Hedging](#).

- **✗ Absolute:** *Every student learns best from recorded lectures.*
- **✓ Hedged:** *Many students benefit from recorded lectures, especially for review.*

3. Formal Tone and Vocabulary

Avoid Informal Vocabulary

Avoid informal expressions such as “a lot of,” “lots of,” and “really,” and expressions such as “gonna” or “wanna.” Instead, use precise, academic wording.

- **✗ Informal:** *The article had a lot of stuff that was really hard.*
- **✓ Academic:** *The article presented several complex concepts.*

Avoid Idioms and Proverbs

Idioms (e.g., “Tuition costs an arm and a leg”) and proverbs (e.g., “Every coin has two sides”) create an informal tone that is inappropriate for academic writing. Instead, use literal, straightforward language.

- **✗ Idiom:** *Some students bite off more than they can chew in the first month.*
- **✓ Academic:** *Some students enroll in too many credits during the first month.*

Avoid Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs often function as idioms. Replace them with single-word verbs when possible.

- **✗ Phrasal:** *First-year students look up to senior students for advice.*
- **✓ Formal:** *First-year students admire senior students and seek their advice.*

Avoid Contractions

Spell out words fully rather than using contractions such as “isn’t,” “aren’t,” “can’t,” “they’re,” and “it’s.”

- **✗ Contraction:** *It’s important that students don’t miss deadlines.*
- **✓ Academic:** *It is important that students do not miss deadlines.*

4. Sentence and Paragraph Structure

Avoid Questions to Present Key Points

Rather than posing a question and answering it, state the idea directly.

- **✗ Question + answer:** *Why do many students struggle with time management? Many students balance classes and work.*
- **✓ Direct statement:** *Many students struggle with time management because they balance classes and work.*

Avoid “Magazine-Style” Writing

Avoid writing one-sentence paragraphs; academic paragraphs need a topic sentence followed by supporting sentences. Also avoid “hooks” in introductions. These are attention-grabbing openers like surprising facts, broad generalizations, or rhetorical questions. While hooks work in informal writing, they tend to sound too casual in academic work. Instead, give the reader helpful background, narrow the focus, and present the thesis statement.

- **✗ One-sentence paragraph:** *Time management matters.*
- **✓ Academic paragraph opener:** *Effective time management supports academic success by enabling regular study sessions and timely task completion.*

Avoid Starting Sentences With “And,” “But,” or “So”

Use formal transitions (In addition, ...; However, ...) at the beginning of a sentence. Conjunctions (and, but, so) are fine within a sentence.

- **✗ Informal start:** *So students improved after the workshop.*
- **✓ Formal start:** *Therefore, students improved after the workshop.*
- **Within a sentence (acceptable):** *The survey was completed on time, but the sample size was small.*

Avoid Unnecessary Adverbs of Intensity

Avoid adverbs such as *really*, *very*, *definitely*, *absolutely* and phrases such as *without a doubt*, *beyond a doubt*, *there can be no doubt*. These expressions can make writing sound overly emotional.

- **✗ Intensifier:** *The results were really surprising.*
- **✓ Precise:** *The results were unexpected.*

Can I use Generative AI help me check whether I have used academic language?

How Generative AI can help

- Identify **non-academic or informal language**
 - Example prompt: “Check this essay for informal language and suggest more academic alternatives.”
- Check **tone and objectivity**
 - Example prompt: “Does this paragraph maintain an objective academic tone? If not, explain why.”
- Help with **cohesion**
 - Example prompt: “Check whether this paragraph is cohesive and uses appropriate academic transitions. Explain any issues and make suggestions.”
- Provide **feedback instead of rewriting**. Ask AI **not to rewrite**, but to give feedback, similar to instructor comments.
 - Example prompt: “Provide feedback on the academic style of this paragraph without rewriting it.”

What AI Cannot (and Should Not) Do:

It’s important to be clear about limitations:

-  It cannot verify scholarly accuracy or argument quality
-  It should not replace the student’s thinking
-  It cannot determine intent or plagiarism on its own
-  It may produce language that *sounds* academic but is vague

AI feedback should always be:

- ✓ reviewed critically
- ✓ combined with human instruction
- ✓ used transparently (include attribution and mention your use in your Writer's Memo)

Key takeaways

- Academic writing uses a **formal, professional tone** and is based on **evidence**, not personal opinion.
- Avoid **I, we, and you**; focus on ideas, not personal opinion
- Use **gender-inclusive language** (singular *they* when gender is unknown).
- Use **clear, precise language** and avoid vague or absolute claims.
- Choose **formal vocabulary** (no idioms, phrasal verbs, or contractions).
- Write **well-developed paragraphs** (no one-sentence paragraphs or casual hooks) with direct statements and formal transitions.
- Generative AI can give **style feedback**, but you must **think critically** and use it transparently.

Source consulted

Adapted from: Lane, J. & Lange, E. (1999). *Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide, 2nd edition*.

53.

COHESION AND COHERENCE IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Understanding Cohesion in Academic Writing

The word cohesion come from the Latin verb *cobaerēre* which means to stick together. In English academic writing, it is the responsibility of the writer to make sure that the ideas expressed in an essay are clear and easy for the reader to understand.

Why is cohesion important?

Look at the two paragraphs below. They are almost identical. Which is easier to follow and understand? Why?

Examples

Example 1: Research showed that universities provided inconsistent messages about the use of mobile computing devices. Some universities provided students with devices and instructors with implementation support. All instructors were not willingly taking advantage of those opportunities. Other institutions worked to provide university-related applications for the mobile device but did not support their use in learning. Some instructors at the universities deemed the devices as inappropriate and asked students to store them away when entering the classroom. This inconsistent message remains a barrier to the effective implementation of mobile devices in higher education.

Example 2: Research showed that universities provided inconsistent messages about the use of mobile computing devices. *On the one hand*, some universities provided students with devices and instructors with implementation support. *Yet*, all instructors were not willingly taking advantage of those opportunities. *On the other*

hand, other institutions worked to provide university-related applications for the mobile device but did not support their use in learning. *Therefore*, some instructors at the universities deemed the devices as inappropriate and asked students to store them away when entering the classroom. This inconsistent message remains a barrier. *In short*, this inconsistent message remains a barrier to the effective implementation of mobile devices in higher education.

Text adapted from: Gikas, J. & Grant, M. (2013). Mobile computing devices in higher education: Student perspectives on learning with cellphones, smartphones, & social media.)

Analysis of Example Paragraphs

You probably noticed the second example contains a number of expressions which clarify the connections between ideas. **Example 2 is better** because transitions clearly show how the ideas are connected. **Example 1** lists information but does not clearly explain relationships between ideas, making it harder to follow.

Techniques for Building Coherence

When sentences, ideas, and details fit together clearly, readers can follow along easily, and the writing is **coherent**. The ideas tie together smoothly and clearly. To establish the links that readers need, use the methods listed here.

Repetition of a Key Term or Phrase

This technique focuses your ideas and keeps your reader on track. These repeated words and their related terms are sometimes referred to as *lexical chains*.

Example: The problem with **contemporary art** is that it is not easily understood by most people. **Contemporary art** is deliberately abstract, and that means it leaves the viewer wondering what she is looking at.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have essentially the same meaning, and they provide some variety in your word choices, helping the reader to stay focused on the idea being discussed.

Example: *Myths* narrate sacred histories and explain sacred origins. ***These traditional narratives*** are, in short, a set of beliefs that are a very real force in the lives of the people who tell them.

Pronouns

This, that, these, those, he, she, it, and they are useful pronouns for referring back to something previously mentioned. Be sure, however, that what you are referring to is clear.

Example: When ***scientific experiments*** do not work out as expected, they are often considered failures until some other scientist tries ***them*** again. ***Those*** that work out better the second time around are the ones that promise the most rewards.

Transitional Words

There are many words in English that cue our readers to relationships between sentences, joining sentences together. See the next chapter for more transition words. There you will find lists of words, such as *however, therefore, in addition, also, but, moreover*, etc.

Example: I like autumn, ***and yet*** autumn is a sad time of the year, too. The leaves turn bright shades of red and the weather is mild, ***but*** I can't help thinking ahead to the winter and the ice storms that will surely blow through here. ***In addition***, that will be the season too many layers of clothes to put on and days when I'll have to shovel heaps of snow from the sidewalk.

This/These Plus Summary Nouns

A simple, efficient way to establish the old-to-new flow of information is to use:

- Demonstrative pronoun (*This / These*) + noun (singular or plural)

Consider the following sentences.

Example: Writing instructors know that students need to understand the differences between formal and informal language. ***This understanding*** can help students make strategic choices in their writing.

What does ***this understanding*** refer to?

Example: In recent years, the number of students applying for undergraduate admission at Ivy League

colleges has increased steadily, while the number of places available has remained fairly constant. ***This situation*** has resulted in intense competition for admission.

What does ***this situation*** refer to? What is the effect of using ***this*** instead of ***that***? Could the writer have used only *this* instead of *this situation*?

The phrases in italics contain a **summary noun** or **word** that refers back to the idea in the previous sentence. They summarize what has already been said and pick up where the previous sentence has ended. You may have noticed in your academic reading that *this* is not always followed by a noun—that is, *this* is unsupported or unattended. Keep in mind, however, that if there is a possibility your reader will not understand what *this* is referring to, your best strategy is to follow *this* with a noun so that your meaning is clear.

List of This/These + Summary Nouns

- approach – method, strategy, process, idea
- trend – pattern, tendency
- disadvantage – weakness, problem, challenge, obstacle, difficulty, drawback
- advantage – strength, solution, benefit
- aspect – characteristic, feature, factor
- stage – step, part
- reason – cause, effect, result
- circumstance – situation, example, issue

How AI Can Help with Cohesion

Guidelines for using AI to check cohesion

How to use AI Ethically

- Use AI to **get feedback**, *not to write your paragraph*.
- Ask AI to **explain problems**, *not to fix everything*.

- Always **read AI suggestions carefully** and decide what to use.
- Combine AI feedback with **teacher and peer feedback**.
- If required, **mention AI use** in your Writer's Memo.

Limits of AI

- AI may **sound correct but still be unclear**.
- AI cannot always know **what you really mean**.
- AI may **add transitions that do not fit your ideas**.
- AI should not decide your arguments or rewrite your essay for you.

Example prompts

- “Check this paragraph for cohesion. Are the ideas connected clearly?”
- “Do my transition words help the reader understand the relationship?”
- “Is it clear what *this* refers to in this paragraph?”
- “Suggest simple transitions, but do not rewrite my paragraph.”

AI is a **tool to support your learning**, not a replacement for your thinking. You are responsible for making sure your ideas **connect together clearly**.

Watch this video

From Scientific Writing with Karen L. McKee



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=239#oembed-1>

Key Takeaways

- **Cohesion** means ideas in a paragraph “stick together” and are easy to follow.

- Writers are responsible for **clearly connecting ideas** for the reader.
- Writing is more cohesive when it uses **clear links between sentences**.
- Common techniques for cohesion include:
 - Repeating **key words or phrases**
 - Using **synonyms**
 - Using **pronouns** clearly
 - Using **transition words** (however, therefore, in addition)
 - Using **this/these + a summary noun** to refer back to ideas
- Good cohesion helps readers **understand relationships between ideas** and follow the argument easily.

54.

TRANSITION WORDS FOR COHESION AND COHERENCE

Transition Words and Phrases

Transition words and phrases are used to connect ideas together. They are used within paragraphs and between paragraphs to enhance the flow of ideas.

Below are some common expressions. Some are useful for connecting paragraphs while others are more appropriate for joining ideas within a sentence. *The best way to learn which transition words can be used for which purposes is to pay attention to the way they are used in the texts you read.*

Transition words in any given category are NOT synonyms, and often require different grammatical structures. Choose exactly the best word for your purposes (don't just substitute). Use the [Skell Corpus](#) to check how these expressions are used in example sentences.

Additive Transitions

Function: to connect two ideas together by adding additional information

- furthermore, moreover, in addition, also
 - *The biology lecture was fast-paced; **furthermore**, the professor assigned extra readings for next week.*
 - *I joined the pre-law club this semester; **moreover**, I'm planning to attend their networking events.*
 - *The dorm kitchen was messy. **In addition**, two appliances were broken.*
- admittedly, certainly, typically

- **Admittedly**, I started the assignment late, but I still managed to submit it before the deadline.
- **Certainly**, taking notes by hand helps me focus in large lectures.
- **Typically**, first-year students struggle most with managing long reading lists.
- in fact, indeed
 - I thought the exam would be hard. **In fact**, it was easier than expected.
 - Group projects can be stressful; **indeed**, our team needed three meetings just to divide the tasks.
- first, second, third
 - **First**, I check the weekly syllabus; **second**, I organize tasks in a planner.

Order of Importance Transitions

Function: to signal the importance of events

- above all, first and foremost, more/most
 - **Above all**, maintaining a consistent sleep schedule helps me stay focused in class.
 - **First and foremost**, tuition deadlines must be met to avoid late fees.
 - The **most** important step in preparing for finals is starting early.
- a more important, the most important, the primary / main, the second most significant
 - A **more important** challenge for new students is managing their time independently.
 - The **main** reason I switched majors was discovering I loved sociology.
 - The **second most significant** factor was the professor's recommendation.

Contrastive Transitions

Function: to signal a contradiction or difference

- however, nevertheless, in contrast, on the other hand
 - *The dorm is loud on weekends; **however**, the study lounges stay quiet.*
 - *I forgot to set an alarm; **nevertheless**, I made it to class on time.*
 - *The dining hall is always crowded; **in contrast**, the campus café is calm.*
- but, yet
 - *The textbook is expensive, **but** the professor lets us borrow a class copy.*
 - *I enjoy chemistry, **yet** the lab reports take forever to finish.*
- although, even though, whereas, while
 - ***Although** the library is far from my dorm, I still study there every night.*
 - ***Even though** my roommate wakes up early, she always tries to be quiet.*
 - *Engineering majors have many required courses, **whereas** liberal arts majors have more electives.*
- despite, in spite of, compared to/with
 - ***Despite** the cold weather, students still walk to the gym every morning.*
 - ***In spite of** being sick last week, he caught up on all assignments.*
 - *The 8 a.m. class feels long **compared to** the afternoon sessions.*

Comparative Transitions

Function: to emphasize similarity

- likewise, similarly, at the same time
 - *My roommate prefers studying in the library; **likewise**, I concentrate better there.*
 - *The math review helped me prepare; **similarly**, the practice quiz boosted my confidence.*
 - *The writing center supports ESL writers; **at the same time**, it helps native speakers improve clarity.*
- by comparison, in much the same way, once again
 - *My fall semester was overwhelming; **by comparison**, spring felt more manageable.*
 - *She organizes her planner **in much the same way** she structures her study notes.*
 - *The professor reminded us, **once again**, to submit drafts before the deadline.*

Cause and Effect Transitions

Function: to signal that one event happens as a result of another

- as a result / consequence, consequently, therefore / thus, for this reason
 - *I missed the lecture. **As a result**, I had trouble understanding the homework.*
 - *The club meeting ran long. **Consequently**, I skipped dinner.*
 - *My computer crashed; **therefore**, I had to rewrite half of my essay.*
- because, since
 - ***Because** I had two exams on the same day, I started studying early.*
 - ***Since** the Wi-Fi was down, we met in person to finish the project.*
 - *I changed my schedule **because** the class conflicted with my job.*
- so
 - *The lab ran late, **so** I emailed my professor about the assignment extension.*
 - *We couldn't find a study room, **so** we reviewed notes in the hallway.*

- *I ran out of dining dollars, **so** I started bringing lunch from home.*
- due to, be the result of, given that
 - *The bus was delayed **due to** icy roads.*
 - *Low attendance **was the result of** the snowstorm.*
 - ***Given that** the course requires group work, we exchanged contact info.*

Giving Examples

Function: to introduce an illustration or example

- for example, for instance, to illustrate
 - *Time management is challenging; **for example**, students often underestimate how long readings take.*
 - *Some professors require participation; **for instance**, attendance affects your final grade.*
 - ***To illustrate**, my history class assigns weekly discussion posts.*
- specifically, in particular, that is
 - *I'm taking three science courses—**specifically**, biology, chemistry, and geology.*
 - *Two assignments were difficult—**in particular**, the statistics problem set.*
 - *I need to revise my paper—**that is**, reorganize the body paragraphs.*
- such as, an example of
 - *Campus offers many resources, **such as** tutoring, advising, and counseling.*
 - *My roommate likes outdoor activities, **such as** biking along the lakeshore.*
 - *An **example of** successful group work is when every member contributes equally.*

Conclusion Transitions

Function: to signal a final summary of ideas

- to summarize, in summary, in short, in sum
 - ***To summarize**, the semester was busy but manageable with good planning.*
 - ***In summary**, attending office hours helped me improve my writing.*
 - ***In short**, joining a study group made a big difference.*
- in conclusion, to conclude
 - ***In conclusion**, the dorm environment plays a major role in student success.*
 - ***To conclude**, consistent attendance is the strongest predictor of good grades.*
 - ***In conclusion**, the new advising system is easier to use.*
- accordingly, ultimately
 - *I missed the deadline; **accordingly**, I lost a few points.*
 - *We practiced the presentation many times; **ultimately**, it went smoothly.*

Watch this video

From the Learning Portal



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:

<https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/esl117/?p=243#oembed-1>

Key Takeaways

- Transition words **connect ideas** and improve the flow of writing.
- They can be used **within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs**.
- Different transitions show different relationships (addition, contrast, cause–effect, examples, conclusions).
- Transition words are **not all interchangeable**; choose the one that fits your meaning and structure. Use the [Skell Corpus](#) or ask Generative AI to help you decide which expression to use.
- Noticing how transitions are used in **academic texts** helps you learn how to use them correctly.
- Using transitions well makes writing **clearer, more cohesive, and easier to follow**.

GLOSSARY

Below are some terms and concepts you have encountered throughout this Pressbook.

collocation

devil's advocate

CREDITS

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