



Middle School Writers Handbook

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ACADEMIC HONESTY AND THE USE OF AI	4
WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?	6
GOOD READERS MAKE GOOD WRITERS	8
ANNOTATING	10
THE RHETORICAL SITUATION	12
THE WRITING PROCESS	17
THE GENRES OF WRITING	19
HOW TO STRUCTURE AN ESSAY	22
HOW TO EMBED QUOTES	24
METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT	26
WHEN STUDENTS RESEARCH	28
FORMATTING AN ESSAY	29
TIPS FOR GOOD WRITING	30
GLOSSARY OF LITERARY & WRITING TERMS	39
WORKS CONSULTED	43
APPENDIX	45

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Old Bridge Middle School Writing Handbook. Whether you are just beginning your writing journey or looking to refine your skills, this handbook is designed to support you every step of the way. Recognizing the worth of every person, Old Bridge Public Schools are committed to empowering each student to achieve success and become a confident, productive member of a diverse global society, prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century and to create a nurturing environment where all students can learn the skills necessary to thrive as respectful members of their community.

The National Writing Project states, "[Writing is essential to communication, learning, and citizenship, and is the currency of the new workplace and global economy.](#)" Mastering effective writing skills and strategies is needed to succeed in society. Writing is more than just a school assignment; it is a powerful tool for communication, expression, and personal growth. It helps us share ideas, solve problems, and understand our changing world.



The purpose of writing is to communicate ideas effectively. When you write, you organize your thoughts, make your ideas more clear, and dive into deeper analysis. Putting words on paper forces you to organize your thoughts logically and clearly. Writing helps you process information, reflect on your experiences, and develop critical thinking skills. It allows you to explore complex topics, spell out your

arguments, and communicate your understanding. By using writing as a tool for thought, you boost your ability to learn.

In the age of artificial intelligence, writing remains a necessary tool for critical thinking and creativity. While AI can assist in many areas, the ability to think deeply and express original ideas through writing is a uniquely human skill that encourages intellectual growth and originality.

This handbook is designed to help you understand and navigate the writing process, from brainstorming ideas to polishing your final draft. Inside, you will find practical tips, detailed explanations, and examples illustrating key concepts. Divided into sections, it provides explanations and examples of writing instruction grounded in current research and best practices.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND THE USE OF AI



Academic honesty is the practice of being truthful and responsible in your school work. It means doing your *own* work and giving proper credit to the sources you use, including any assistance from artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Every assignment you complete in school is designed to measure your understanding of a subject or your skill in a particular area. The grades you receive should reflect your *own* knowledge and abilities, *not* the work of others.

How to Practice Academic Honesty

- ✓ **Do Your Own Work:** Complete assignments independently unless working with others is directly allowed by your teacher.
- ✓ **Cite Sources:** When you use information from books, articles, websites, or any other sources, give proper credit through citations.

Example: "Academic honesty is fundamental to education" (Smith 45).

- ✓ **Acknowledge AI Use:** If you use AI tools, clearly state their role in your work.

Example: "This paper utilized Grammarly for grammar and style suggestions" or "ChatGPT was used to generate initial ideas for this essay."

- ✓ **Paraphrase and Summarize Correctly:** Rephrase ideas from a source in your own words and provide a citation.

Example: Smith emphasizes that maintaining academic honesty is essential for educational integrity (45).

- ✓ **Ask for Help:** If you're unsure how to cite sources or whether something counts as plagiarism, ask your teacher for guidance.

- ✓ **Use Resources:** Familiarize yourself with tools and resources, such as citation guides and plagiarism detection tools, that can help you maintain academic honesty.

By sticking to these rules, you guarantee that your academic achievements are genuine and reflect your true abilities and efforts. Incorporating AI ethically in your work improves your learning experience while maintaining the honesty of your academic efforts.

ETHICAL USE OF AI IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly popular in education for their ability to assist with writing, research, and organization. While these tools can be valuable, they must be used correctly to maintain academic honesty and show what you genuinely know how to do.

Key Principles for Ethical AI Use

Transparency: Always explain when and how you have used AI tools in your work.

Originality: Make sure that the final content of your assignments is your own. AI tools should assist in the writing *process*, not replace your original thought and effort.

Proper Acknowledgement: Just as you would cite sources for text and ideas, you should also acknowledge the use of AI tools in your work. If you use AI tools to help create new ideas or text, make sure to review and edit what it gives you to make sure it reflects your own voice and understanding. Always cite any content that directly influences your work.

Using AI tools to produce a text you submit as your own work without proper modification or citation is considered plagiarism.

How to Use AI Ethically

Aid, Don't Replace: Use AI to help with grammar, spelling, style suggestions, or generating ideas. Avoid relying on AI to write sizeable parts of your assignments.

Review and Edit: Always review and edit any content generated by AI. Make sure it reflects your voice and understanding and make necessary modifications to align it with your own thoughts and ideas.

Cite AI Assistance: When AI has drastically added to your work, acknowledge this in a footnote, endnote, or within the text itself.

Understand the Tool: Know the capabilities and limitations of the AI tools you are using. This understanding helps you use them appropriately and avoids over-reliance on AI-created content.

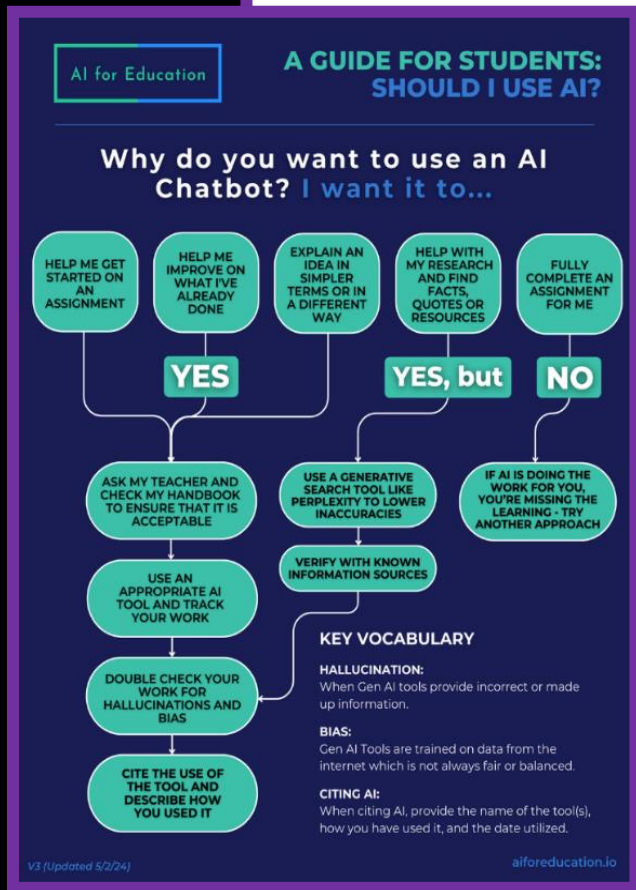


Image Source:

<https://www.aiforeducation.io/ai-resources/student-guide-ai-use>

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism is a serious scholarly offense and is subject to disciplinary action. Plagiarism involves using someone else's words, ideas, or work without proper acknowledgment. While certain information like common knowledge (e.g., "The United States has fifty states") does not require citation, specific details or unique ideas must be credited to their source. By understanding what plagiarism is and taking steps to avoid it, you can make sure that your work maintains high standards of academic integrity. Proper citation gives credit to the original creators and strengthens your writing by showing that your arguments are well-researched and supported by credible sources.



Some examples of plagiarism are as follows:

- You get an essay from a **friend** or from the **internet** and put your name at the top.
- You copy passages from print or online sources unchanged and without citation.
- You copy passages and change a few words without correct citation (paraphrasing).
- You use ideas presented by others in your paper without correct citation.
- You can also plagiarize yourself. If you submit a paper that you wrote for one class for credit in another class, you are guilty of plagiarism.
- If you use an idea from a book, movie, speech, magazine, lecture, journal, teleplay, or electronic source and represent it as an original thought—even if it is expressed in your own words—then you have committed an act of plagiarism.

HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

Give credit for all lines of thinking, facts, evidence, arguments, paraphrased summaries, statistics, graphs, photographs, artworks, and any other material not created by you.

- **Direct quotation:** Use quotation marks around word-for-word sentences used from **any** material (e.g. everything from online databases to songs to interviews to books to journals, etc.) and provide a correct citation. **Example:** "Direct quotes must always be cited properly" (Smith 45).
- **Paraphrasing:** When rephrasing someone else's ideas, ensure you do so in your own words and still provide a citation showing the original source. **Example:** Smith argues that proper citation practices are essential for academic integrity (45).
- **Summarizing:** Condense the main points of a source in your own words and provide a citation. **Example:** Smith's research highlights the significance of proper citation practices in academic writing (45).
- **Acknowledge AI Use:** If you use AI tools, state their role in your work. **Example:** "This paper utilized Grammarly for grammar and style suggestions" or "ChatGPT was used to generate initial ideas for this essay."
- Ask for permission to use copyrighted images and other materials and cite them.

For more complete information on plagiarism visit the following:

[Plagiarism Overview - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)

[Easy Bib Plagiarism Guide](#)

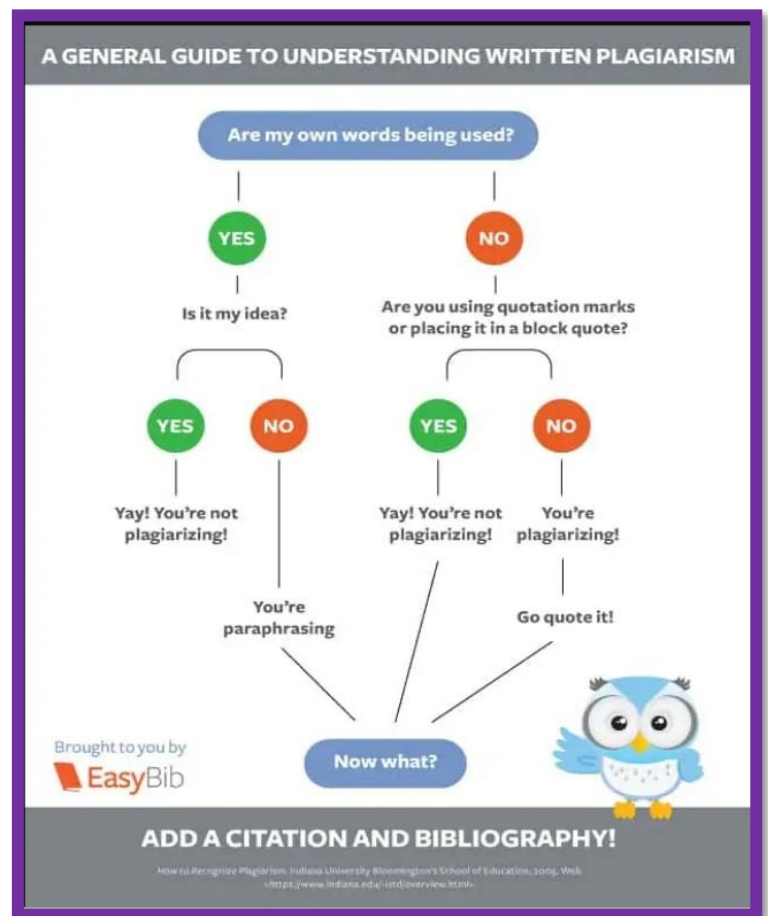


Image source: <https://www.easybib.com/guides/plagiarism-guide/what-is-plagiarism/>

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A CRITICAL READER?

Good writing often begins with good reading. When you read a variety of things, you often expose yourself to different writing styles, structures, and ideas. This exposure helps you understand how to communicate your *own* thoughts and arguments well.

The process of writing an essay usually begins with the close reading of a text. Most of the papers you write will involve making inferences about the things you read. To write your own exploration of this subject, you will need to carefully read the sources and use them to prove your argument. The judgments and understanding you make of the texts you read are the first steps toward creating your own style.

What Is Critical Reading?

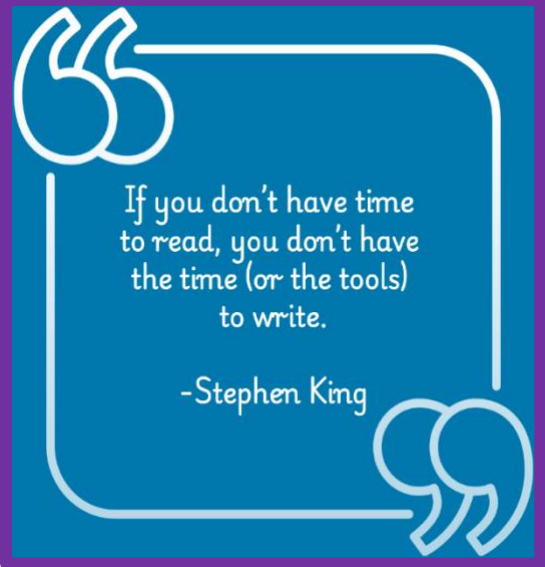
Critical reading means being actively involved in what you read by developing a clear understanding of the author's ideas, evaluating the arguments and evidence provided to support these arguments, and forming your own opinions.

Whenever you read, read to understand “how,” “why,” and “what.” Look for the features of reasoning: purpose, question at issue, point of view, information, concepts, inferences, assumptions, conclusions, context, and alternatives.

Ask questions like:

- What is the author's purpose?
- What evidence does the author provide, and is it convincing?
- Are there any biases or assumptions in the text?
- How does this information connect to what I already know?

This approach not only increases your understanding but also helps you to analyze and interpret texts, which is crucial for writing effectively.



ANNOTATING



- **Prepare to become part of the writer's audience.** Authors design texts for specific audiences, and becoming a member of the target audience makes it easier to understand the author's purpose. Learn about the author, the history of the author and the text, and the author's anticipated audience; read introductions and notes.

- **Prepare to read with an open mind.** Critical readers seek knowledge; they do not "rewrite" a work to suit their own personalities. Your task as a critical reader is to read what is on the page, giving the writer a fair chance to develop ideas and allowing yourself to reflect thoughtfully on the text.



- Consider **the title.** The title may provide clues to the writer's attitude, goals, personal viewpoint, or approach.

- **Read slowly.** By slowing down, you will make more connections within the text.

- **Use the dictionary and other appropriate reference works.** Every word is important. If there is a word in the text that is not clear or difficult to define in context, look it up!

CLOSE READERS

DO THESE THINGS

- Read the text slowly at least twice ▶▶ x 2
- Get the gist of what the text is about ★
- Circle words you aren't sure of and try to figure them out ○
- Reread, annotate, and underline key vocabulary 
- Use the text to answer questions ???
- Gather evidence from the text 🔍
- Talk with each other about what you think it means 
- Read again to summarize or answer specific questions ↶

- **Make notes.** Jot down notes in the margins, underline and highlight words and phrases, write down ideas in a notebook, and do whatever works for your own personal taste. Note for yourself the main ideas, the thesis, and the author's main points to support the theory.

- **Keep a reading journal.** In addition to note-taking, it is often helpful to regularly write down your responses and thoughts in a more permanent place that is yours to look back on. Developing a habit of reading and writing together will improve both skills.







ACTIVE READING AND ANNOTATION STRATEGIES

Reading any text (literary or non-fiction) requires the mental acts of observing, connecting, inferring, and concluding. It requires careful attention to details of language and structure. Good readers not only look for the information but also think about how that information is presented. Good readers observe the details of how stories are told, how arguments are made, and how evidence is presented. Good readers make connections among the details they find. Good readers make inferences based on those connected observations, inferences that prepare them to make develop ideas about the text. Good readers are also involved in what they read. They respond with questions if they need clarification and interact with the text even after finishing. This is what we call active reading or annotation. Reading like this provides both intellectual and emotional responses to the text.

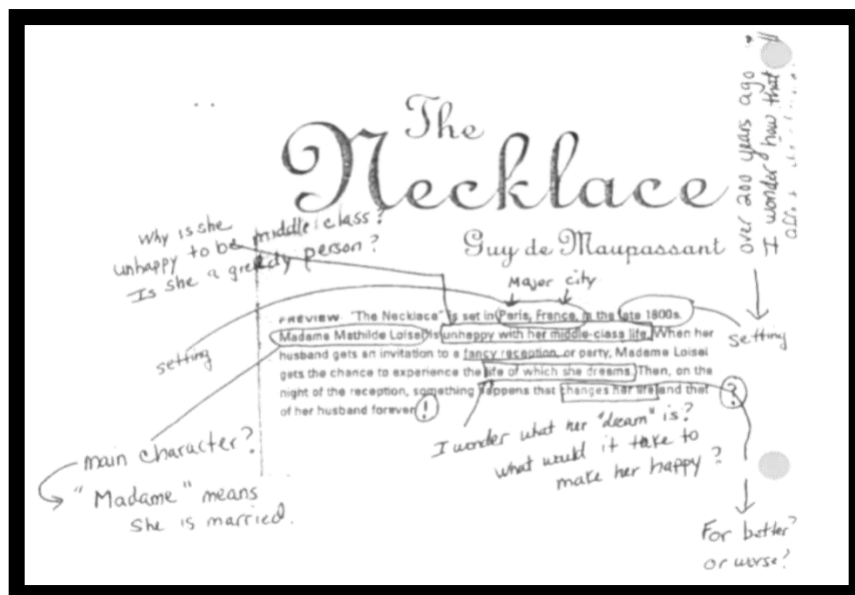
"Annotating" means underlining or highlighting keywords and phrases—anything that strikes you as surprising or significant or that raises questions—as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence—the first step in moving from reader to writer.

The following guidelines will help you to read actively:

1. With pencil in hand, skim the contents of the document. Pay attention to chapter titles, headings, diagrams, graphics, and illustrations.
2. Look for the author's main point and mark it when you find it.
3. When you see a word, acronym, sentence, or paragraph that you do not know or understand, mark it and look it up later.
4. Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities.
5. Pause from time to time to think about what you have read and review your notes.
6. Write important ideas and main points in the margins. When you re-read the document later, you can quickly skim the text for main ideas without re-reading the entire text.
7. Ask, "What?" "Why?" "Who?" "How?" and "So what?" questions. If the answers are unclear—mark it. Keep a log of your questions, ideas, findings, and comments.
8. Pay attention to reasoning. If the reasons are not clear to you—mark them and look them up later.
9. Look for connections to other documents that might be helpful as resources.
10. Re-read the document and compare your first thoughts with your new understanding. Have your questions been answered? If not, who can answer them?

SYMBOL	ACTIVE READING AND ANNOTATION STRATEGIES
	Underline or Highlight important information and details
	Circle important or unfamiliar words
	Use Question Marks to indicate confusion or questions about concepts and ideas
	Use an Asterisk to make connections from the text to other sources
	Use a Check to agree with an idea
	Use a X to disagree

What Good Annotation Looks Like

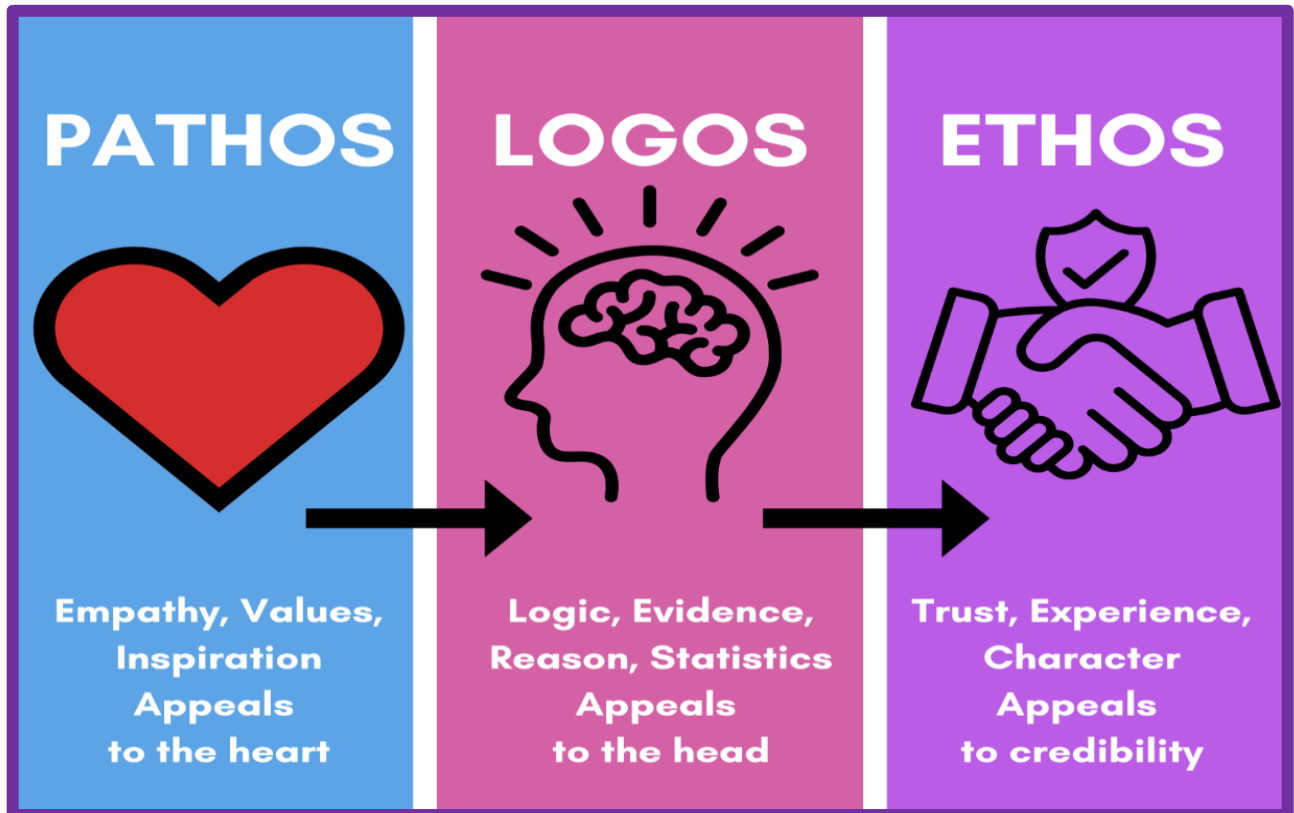


Additional Resource: <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/sixreadinghabits>

The Three Appeals of Persuasion

ETHOS, LOGOS, AND PATHOS

The goal of most writing is to persuade an audience that your ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else's. Purpose, audience, tone, and diction are just a few elements a writer must consider. Selecting appropriate examples and expressing yourself clearly is also important if you want to charm your reader. The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided the means of persuasion, called appeals, into three categories—**Ethos, Pathos, and Logos**.



Ethos (Credibility) is an appeal to the writer or speaker's credibility and character. It involves convincing the audience that the writer or speaker is trustworthy and knowledgeable. We tend to believe people whom we respect. As author, you must be an authority on the subject of the paper, as well as someone who is likable and worthy of respect.



Example: "I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia."

-Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

King establishes his credibility and authority by citing his leadership in a well-known civil rights organization.

The Three Appeals of Persuasion

ETHOS, LOGOS, AND PATHOS

Logos (Logical) appeal means persuading through reason. Logos relies on reasoning, facts, and statistics.



Example: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

-Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence”

Jefferson uses logical reasoning to argue for the inherent rights of individuals. It presents a clear, rational statement that forms the foundation for the argument of the document.

Pathos (Emotional) appeal means persuading by appealing to the reader's emotions. Choices in diction and evidence affect the audience's emotional response. The most common way of conveying a pathetic appeal is through a narrative or story.



Example: *“I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard... we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.”*

-Malala Yousafzai, “Speech at the United Nations Youth Assembly”

Yousafzai highlights the plight of those who are oppressed and voiceless, particularly women and girls who are denied education. Her words inspire empathy and a sense of urgency to advocate for equality and justice.

Combining all three rhetorical appeals:

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.”-Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address”

Ethos: Lincoln establishes his credibility by referencing the nation's founding principles and the sacrifice of those who fought in the Civil War. His position as President and his solemn tone lend authority to his words.

Pathos: Lincoln honors the fallen soldiers and invokes a sense of collective sacrifice and commitment to the nation's ideals.

Logos: Lincoln frames the Civil War as a test of the nation's commitment to its founding principles of equality and liberty. He argues that the outcome of the war will determine whether a nation built on these principles can survive, thus making a rational case for why the war effort is crucial for preserving the nation's ideals.

THE WRITING PROCESS

The writing process is an approach to writing that entails the recursive phases of pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing

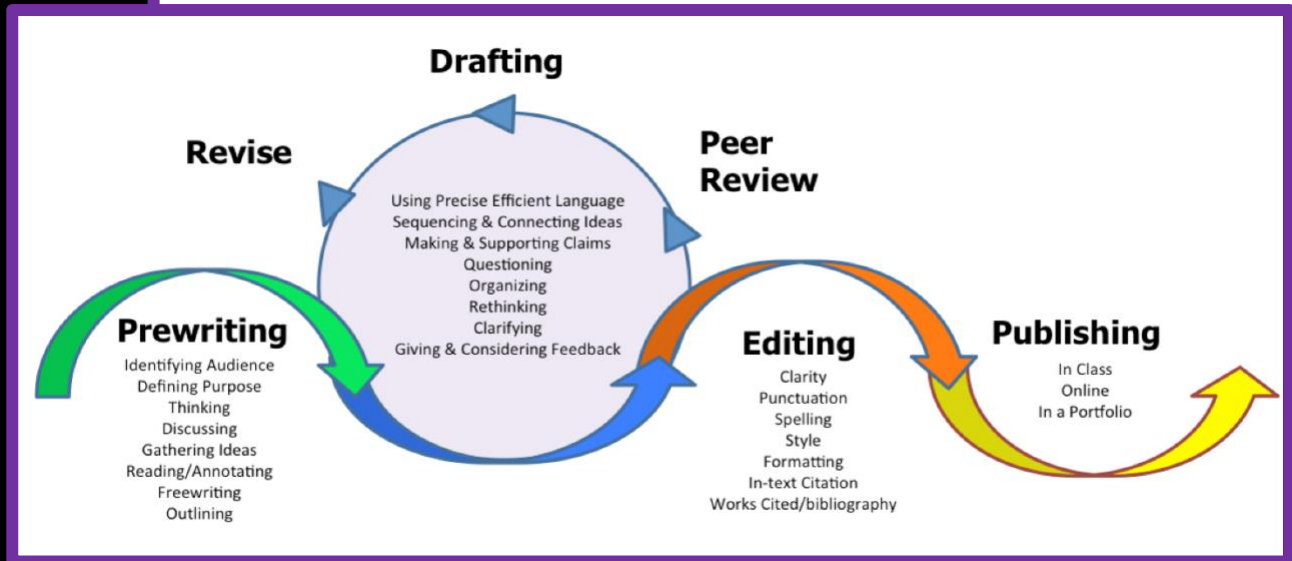


Image Source: "The Writing Process" has been released into the public domain by its author, Luqa Primary.


Five Steps of the Writing Process

PREWRITING refers to the writing activities done before or during early drafting. These activities allow students to think about and gather their ideas. Some prewriting activities are as follows:

- **Brainstorming:** Create ideas by thinking freely about your topic. Write down any thoughts that come to mind without judging or organizing them.
- **Freewriting:** Write continuously about your topic for a short period of time. Don't worry about grammar or spelling; focus on getting your ideas written down.
- **Clustering/Mind Mapping:** Create a visual map of your ideas. Start with your main topic in the center and draw branches to related ideas and subtopics.
- **Researching:** Gather information from reliable sources to support your ideas. Take notes and keep track of your sources for citations.

PREWRITING

- ✓ Determine your purpose for writing.
- ✓ Analyze and unpack your writing task.
- ✓ Identify your target audience.
- ✓ Brainstorm ideas and gather information.



THE FIVE STEPS OF THE WRITING PROCESS



DRAFTING



- ✓ Introduce the topic and grab the reader's attention.
- ✓ Develop ideas with facts, examples, and relevant research
- ✓ Use transitional words and phrases

DRAFTING refers to the actual process of writing things down. During drafting, students establish their ideas and include support and/or evidence for their ideas in a logical order.

REVISING: This part of the process refers to changes made in the content and structure of writing to achieve a particular purpose. During revising, students may either add or delete information, change the organization of the essay, or include or change transitional words or sentences in the essay. Share your draft with a peer for review and feedback.

REVISING

- ✓ Add or omit information when needed.
- ✓ Adjust organization and flow.
- ✓ Verify the writing meets the requirements of the writing task.



EDITING


- ✓ Check spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- ✓ Word choice should be precise and purposeful.
- ✓ Sentence structure should vary.

EDITING: This part of the process refers to revision, focusing specifically on grammar and mechanics. During editing, students should focus on errors that get in the way of the meaning of the content of the essay.

PUBLISHING: This part of the process refers to the time when the targeted audience reads the writing. Students can work with their teachers and/or peers to make their writing "public."

PUBLISHING

- ✓ Write the final copy with your revisions and edits.
- ✓ Add any supplemental features (e.g. illustrations or other media)
- ✓ Share with your intended audience.



THE GENRES OF WRITING



Writing takes many forms. Once you understand the task at hand and the context of your writing, you can decide what your approach will be.

ARGUMENTATIVE/PERSUASIVE WRITING

Argumentative

The argumentative essay is a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position (side they agree with) on the topic. Argumentative essay assignments may require a lot of research of literature or non-fictional texts where the student collects data through interviews, surveys, observations, or experiments. Detailed research allows the student to learn about the topic and to understand different points of view regarding the subject so that she/he may choose a position and support it with the evidence collected during research. Regardless of the amount or type of research involved, argumentative essays must establish a clear thesis and follow logical reasoning ([Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)).

Effective arguments contain:

- The claim (that typically answers the question: “What do I think?”)
- The reasons (that typically answer the question: “Why do I think this?”)
- The evidence (that typically answers the question: “How do I know this is the case?”)

Persuasive

Persuasive prompts present controversies arising in their interpersonal school/community or societal contexts. Persuasive prompts ask students to offer their opinions in a persuasive essay or letter format. Likewise, a persuasive essay requires the writer to take a stand and convince the reader that the writer’s position is valid. In addition, the essay should convince an audience to think a certain way or take action on a particular issue.

Summary of Effective Argumentative and Persuasive Writing

- **Claim:** State your main argument or position.
- **Reasons:** Explain why you hold this position.
- **Evidence:** Provide proof to support your reasons, including facts, statistics, and expert opinions.
- **Counterarguments:** Acknowledge and refute opposing viewpoints (primarily in argumentative writing).
- **Emotional Appeals:** Use personal stories and emotional language to connect with your audience (primarily in persuasive writing).
- **Call to Action:** Encourage your audience to take action or adopt your viewpoint (primarily in persuasive writing).

Subtle, but Significant differences between Persuasive Writing v. Argumentative Writing

<p>Goal of persuasive writing: To get reader to agree with you/your point of view on a particular topic.</p>	<p>Goal of argumentative writing: To get reader to acknowledge that your side is valid and deserves consideration as another point of view.</p>
<p>General technique of persuasive writing: Blends facts and emotion in attempt to convince the reader that the writer is "right." (Often relies heavily on opinion.)</p>	<p>General technique of argumentative writing: Offers the reader relevant reasons, credible facts, and sufficient evidence to honor the writer has a valid and worthy perspective.</p>
<p>Starting point of persuasive writing: <i>Identify</i> a topic <i>and</i> your side.</p>	<p>Starting point of argumentative writing: <i>Research</i> a topic <i>and then</i> align with one side.</p>
<p>Viewpoint presented in persuasive writing: Persuasion has a single-minded goal. It is based on a personal conviction that a particular way of thinking is the only sensible way to think. Writer presents one side— his side.</p> <p>(Persuasive writing <i>may</i> include ONE opposing point, it is then quickly dismissed/refuted.)</p>	<p>Viewpoint presented in argumentative writing: Acknowledge that opposing views exist, not only to hint at what a fair-minded person you are, but to give you the opportunity to counter these views tactfully in order to show why you feel that your own view is the more worthy one to hold.</p> <p>Writer presents multiple perspectives, although is clearly for one side.</p>
<p>Audience of persuasive writing: Needs intended audience. Knowing what they think and currently believe, the writer "attacks" attempting to persuade them to his side.</p>	<p>Audience of argumentative writing: Doesn't need an audience to convince. The writer is content with simply putting it out there.</p>
<p>Attitude of persuasive writing: Persuasive writers want to gain another "vote" so they "go after" readers more aggressively. Persuasive writing is more personal, more passionate, more emotional.</p>	<p>Attitude of argumentative writing: Simply to get the reader to consider you have an idea worthy of listening to. The writer is sharing a conviction, whether the audience ends up agreeing or not.</p>

THE GENRES OF WRITING

Expository Writing

The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expand on the idea, and create an argument supporting that idea in a clear manner. This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc. (Purdue Online Writing Lab).



Narrative Writing

Narration tells a story by describing an event or a series of related events in an orderly, logical order. Narrative writing includes the elements of a short story, like plot, incorporates descriptive elements such as imagery, metaphors, and similes, and maintains a clear point of view. Narrative writing can be both fiction and nonfiction. Narration can be used to make a point, to illustrate an argument, to offer evidence or counter-evidence, and sometimes even to substitute an argument.

Literary Analysis

Literary analysis is what happens after you read a text carefully to interpret the author's purpose and textual meaning. This practice of writing takes a critical look at various important elements in the text. The writer then attempts to explain the author's purpose and the elements of the text. All written products should always incorporate *textual evidence* as well as global references.

Creative Writing

Creative writing is a genre of writing whose primary purpose is to entertain. Examples of creative writing include poetry, novels, short stories, scripts, screenplays, and blogs.

Research Paper

A research paper is the result and final product of an involved process of research, critical thinking, source evaluation, organization, and writing. The goal of a research paper is not to inform the reader what others have to say about a topic, but to make an original inference based on what others have to say in order to offer an original way of thinking about an idea. Inferences made are always backed up by textual evidence. This is accomplished through two major types of research ([Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)).

HOW TO STRUCTURE AN ESSAY

Introduction

The introduction is the opening paragraph of an essay. The introduction should introduce the topic, provide context, and lead to a specific statement of the main argument or **thesis**. A well-written introduction sets the tone for the essay, catches the reader's attention, and clearly states the purpose of writing.

Parts of an Introduction

- **Hook:** A sentence or two that grabs the reader's attention. It can be a surprising fact, a question, a quote, a brief anecdote, or a bold statement.
- **Background Information:** A few sentences that provide context for the topic, helping the reader understand the importance of the issue.
- **Thesis Statement:** A clear and short statement of the main argument or point of the essay. It outlines the writer's stance and previews the structure of the essay.



Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is typically found at the end of the introductory paragraph. In general, your thesis statement will accomplish the following goals if you think of **the thesis** as **the answer to the question your paper explores**: tests your ideas by shortening them into a sentence or two; better organizes and develops your argument; provides your reader with a "guide" to your argument. A strong thesis statement must be *specific* and express the main idea of your essay.

Thesis Examples:

Weak thesis: *Social media is used by middle school students.*

This thesis statement is weak for two major reasons. First, it is a statement without any argument or specific focus. Second, it provides no insight into social media use's implications, effects, or importance among middle school students.

A **revised thesis** might look like this:

Strong Thesis: *While social media offers middle school students opportunities for socialization and information sharing, it also poses significant risks, including distraction from academic responsibilities, exposure to cyberbullying, and negative impacts on mental health.*

This thesis statement is **strong** because it clearly presents an argument and sets up a discussion on the positive and negative effects of social media on middle school students. It shows that the essay will explore both the benefits and the potential dangers, providing a balanced and specific focus for the analysis.

Body Paragraphs

The **body paragraphs** are the main parts of your essay or paper. Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that tells readers what the paragraph is going to be about, supporting

sentences that discuss the idea or ideas in the topic sentence, using examples and/or evidence to support that discussion, and a concluding sentence that emphasizes the importance of the supporting examples or evaluates the connections between them.



STRUCTURING PARAGRAPHS



T OPIC SENTENCE

Open with a clear topic sentence that establishes the main idea of the paragraph.



E VIDENCE & EXAMPLES

Provide specific examples and evidence to support your initial point.



A NALYSIS

Detail how your evidence or example supports your initial point.



L INK OR TRANSITION

Link your evidence and analysis back to the topic sentence or transition to the next paragraph.

HOW TO EMBED QUOTES (AKA QUOTE SANDWICH)

Embedding Quotations

Another part of the body paragraph is how to properly incorporate examples and evidence to support your claim or main point. Embedding quotes and combining them smoothly into your writing is essential for supporting your arguments and adding credibility to your essay. Another name for embedding quotations is a **Quotation Sandwich**.



Because quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a “**frame**” around them in which you do the speaking for them. Quotations inserted into the text without such a frame may be called ‘**hit-and-run**’ quotations, likening them to car accidents in which the driver speeds away and avoids taking responsibility for the damage.

Example of a “Hit and Run” Quotation:

Patrick Henry reveals to his audience that they are placing their hopes on an illusion of goodwill by the British. “We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts.” This quote shows that they have failed in their attempts at securing peace and liberty.

To properly frame a quotation, you need to insert it into what we call a ‘**quotation sandwich**,’ with the statement introducing it as the top slice of bread and the explanation following it as the bottom slice. The introduction or lead-in should explain who is speaking and set up what the quotation says. The follow-up statements should explain why the quotation illustrates the character’s claim:

Context

Henry reveals to his audience that they are placing their hopes on an illusion of goodwill falsely communicated by the British. He alludes

Quote

to the "song of that siren," a reference to the irresistible, but daunting creatures in *The Odyssey* with the ability to "transform men into beasts," in order to characterize the British promises as ultimately dangerous to American freedom.

Analysis

By connecting the former promises of liberty made by the British diplomats to the alluring, but lethal siren's song, Henry argues that his peers have either been blind or have ignored the truth that the British ministry does not have American interests at heart.

A Quotation Sandwich Has Three Parts:

Context: Introduce the quote by providing a lead-in. The lead-in is a phrase/sentence that prepares the reader, for example, by introducing the speaker, setting, or situation and setting up what the quotation says.

Quotation: The quotation should not be too long or merely state a fact. Include a concrete detail or a specific example from the work used to provide evidence for your topic. Remember to punctuate and cite the quotation correctly.

Analysis/Explanation/Commentary: The interpretation/analysis/inference of the quotation or concrete detail tells the reader what the author of the text means and how the concrete detail proves the topic. *Do not forget to cite your source.*

Conclusion

A conclusion provides closure to the reader, drives the main points home one last time, and gives the reader an understanding of why it matters. If you can remember the following acronym, **TSS**, it will help you remember what to include in your conclusion.

Thesis: Paraphrase your thesis (not copy and paste). You want to make the same point but said in a different way. This drives your point home one last time.

Summarize: Summarize your arguments and paraphrase how you proved the thesis. You may include ideas from topic sentences.

Super So What: A "So What?" for the whole essay. What is the one thing you want the reader to take away? What do you want them to understand or learn? Why should they care about your essay? This is the last line of your conclusion.

Examples

- Thesis:
 - Original: Dogs are better pets than cats.
 - Paraphrased: Dogs make the best pets in the world.
- Summarize: Dogs are cleaner, better at showing affection, and ultimately easier to train.
- Super So What: Change your life for the better - go get a dog!

Combine

- Dogs make the best pets in the world. They are cleaner, better at showing affection, and ultimately are easier to train. Change your life for the better - go get a dog!

Improve and Expand

- There is no doubt that dogs make the best pets in the world. They provide a cleaner environment for your home, are not afraid to show their feelings, and can be trained to do a variety of tricks and jobs. Every second that goes by you are missing out on happiness. Get out of your chair and make a positive difference in your life - go get a dog!

METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT

Methods of development (or patterns of organization) are strategies or patterns writers or speakers use to organize and communicate their ideas. Understanding these modes will help you organize your writing to guarantee clarity and flow. Each mode serves a different purpose and can be used alone or in combination with others, depending on your assignment and your purpose for the essay.

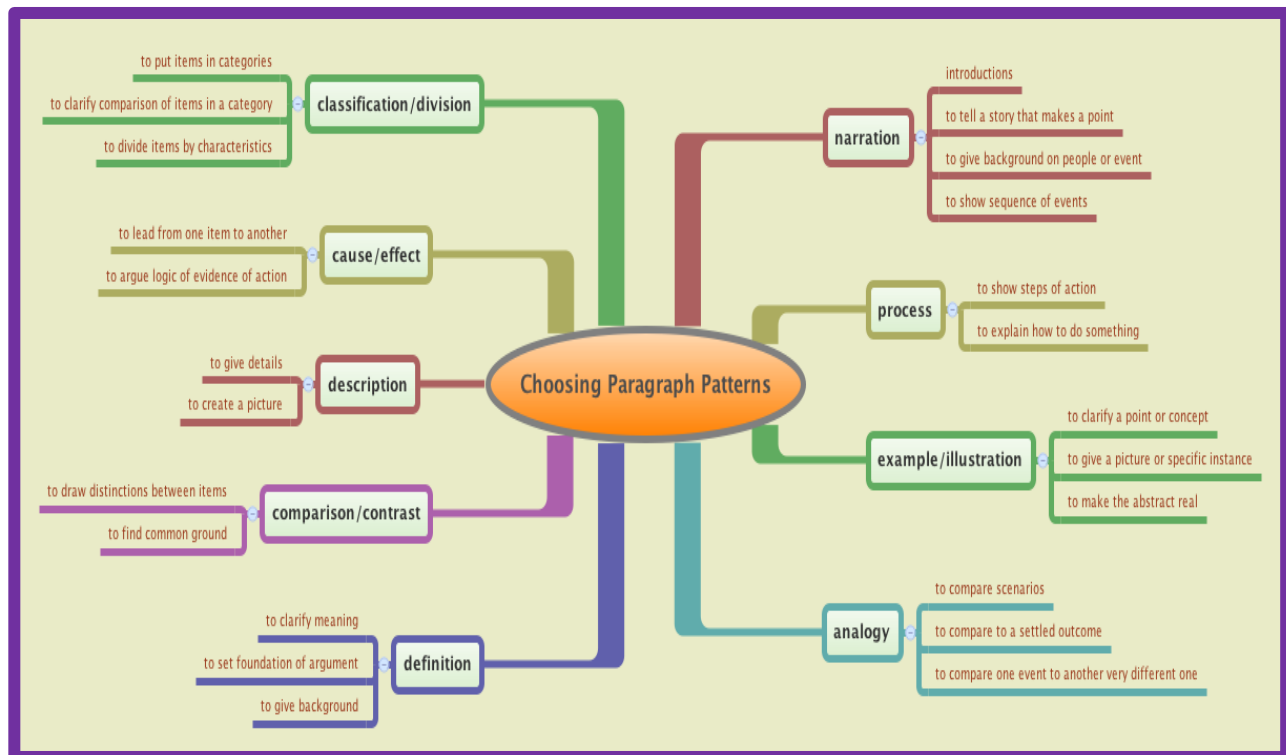


Image Source: "Choosing Paragraph Patterns." Authored by: GrinnPidgeon. Located at: <https://flic.kr/p/a9oiLS> and reproduced in Lumen's English Composition I. License: CC BY-SA: Attribution-Share Alike

Narration:

Narration involves telling a story or describing events. It is often used in personal essays, narratives, and creative writing. This mode focuses on the order (sequence) of events and uses descriptive language to engage the reader.

Description:

Description provides detailed sensory information to help the reader visualize or understand a subject. It is used to create vivid images, evoke emotions, or describe the characteristics of a person, place, thing, or event. Using imagery (the five senses) helps you do this.

METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT

Exemplification:

Exemplification uses specific examples to illustrate a point or explain an idea. This mode explains general ideas by providing concrete instances.

Process Analysis:

Process analysis explains how something is done or how something works. It can be instructional (how-to) or explanatory (describing how a process happens).

Comparison and Contrast:

Comparison and contrast involve examining the similarities and differences between two or more subjects. This mode helps highlight the unique characteristics of each subject.

Cause and Effect:

Cause and effect analyze the reasons why something happened (cause) and the resulting outcomes (effect). This mode is helpful in exploring the reasons behind events or actions and their consequences.

Definition:

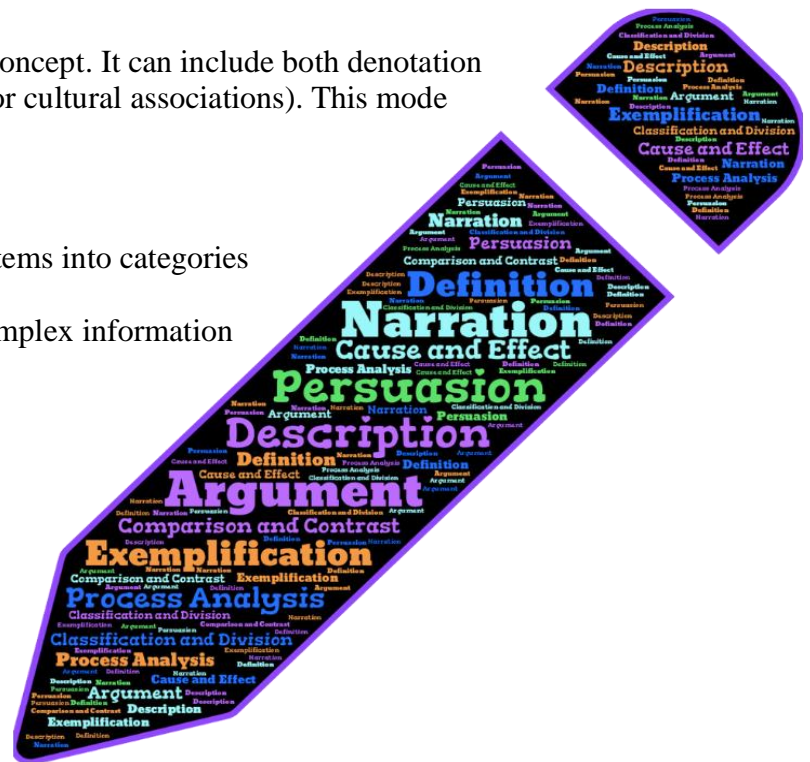
Definition explains the meaning of a term or concept. It can include both denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (emotional or cultural associations). This mode clarifies complex or abstract ideas.

Classification and Division:

Classification and division involve grouping items into categories (classification) or breaking a subject into parts (division). This mode helps organize complex information and make it more understandable.

Argumentation and Persuasion:

Argumentation and persuasion involve presenting a claim and supporting it with evidence and reasoning. The goal is to convince the reader of a particular viewpoint or action.



For more information:

<https://pressbooks.howardcc.edu/engl087/chapter/rhetorical-modes/>

WHEN STUDENTS RESEARCH

Traditional information research tools and sources found in library media centers have been improved by the information available online. In most cases, the internet is where students access information for research projects.

Most information accessed through library resources has passed through one or more information quality filters. On the Internet, we find a much broader range of information quality. As you search for information, you are confronted with the task of sorting and selecting the material you will use. A typical Web search often returns hundreds of hits. While the better search engines rank the hits to help find the sites most worthy of your needs, you will probably have to wade through several sites that are useless as they either don't talk about the topic at all or they are too complicated and meant more for older students and adults.

Evaluating online information is critical to navigating the vast amount of content available on the internet. **Media literacy**—the ability to critically analyze and evaluate media messages—plays an important role in this process. You must learn to assess the *credibility* of sources, tell the difference between fact and opinion, and identify potential biases or misinformation. This skill set is essential for academic success and informed citizenship, as it will empower you to make well-informed decisions and help you get involved in societal issues.

One strategy for determining whether online content can be trusted as a credible or reliable source of information is **SIFT** (see graphic).

FAKE
SIFT
CREDIBLE OR NOT?

S **TOP**
Before you share an article or video, STOP! and consider: What you already know about the topic and What you know about the source. Do you know it's reputation?

I **INVESTIGATE THE SOURCE**
Look up the author and source. What can you find about the author/website creators? Do they have vested interests? Would their assessment be biased? Do they have authority in the area?

F **IND BETTER COVERAGE**
See if you can find other sources confirming the same information or disputing it. What coverage is available on the topic? Keep track of trusted news sources.

T **RACE TO ORIGINAL CONTEXT**
Find where the information is originally from. Was the claim, quote, or media fairly represented? Does the information support the original claims in the research? Is information being taken out of context?

For more information on SIFT:

<https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=1241077&p=9082322>

Access Resources and Databases at the Old Bridge Public Library:

<https://www.oldbridgelibrary.org/>

Image Source: All SIFT information on this page is adapted from his materials with a CC BY 4.0 license.

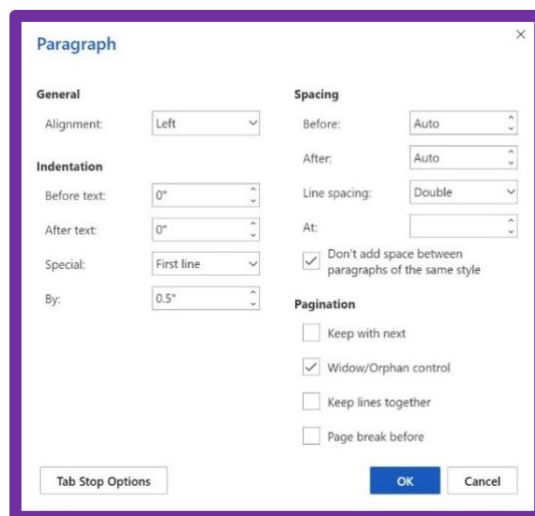
FORMATTING AN ESSAY USING MLA

All essays should follow the Modern Language Association's guidelines for formatting. Using MLA helps writers present their work clearly, consistently, and professionally while also guaranteeing the correct citation and proper credit of sources.

For additional information on MLA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

MLA Formatting General Guidelines

- Type your essay on a computer and print it out on standard 8.5 x 11-inch paper (when your teacher requires it).
- Set your document to double-space the text, 12 pt. Font, Times New Roman, black ink.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one-half-inch from the left margin. Use the Tab key.
- Set your margins to 1" on all sides.
- Only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.
- Create a header that includes your last name, followed by a space with the page number.
- No title page is needed unless told otherwise.
- Proper Heading in the upper left-hand corner of the first page (your name, teacher's name, the course or block number, and the date). The heading must be double-spaced.
- Center your title. It should not be underlined, italicized, or placed in quotation marks.
- Use appropriate quotation marks and/or italics when referring to other works in your title.



TIPS FOR GOOD WRITING

Analysis vs. Summary

What is Summary?

A **summary** is a review or retelling of what you have read without original thoughts or inferences. Summary is *not* the goal of analytical essays. The summary should provide your reader with an overview or background of the text in the briefest manner possible. Assume that the reader of your essay knows the story and needs just the slightest reminder. Strive for 90% interpretation and 10% summary in your essays.



Summary Guidelines:

- Only mention the important plot details.
- Keep your writing in the present tense.
- Make the summary as brief as possible—leave out unnecessary details.
- Although you can use citations in summary, they are not necessary.
- Your summary should have *no* original thoughts or interpretations.

What is Analysis?

The **analysis** explains specific elements within a text. As the writer, you must dissect parts of the text and closely judge them for purpose, effect, or meaning. Analysis will rely on the use of quotations and summaries to show the writer's understanding and interpretation of the material.

Analysis Guidelines:

- Assume the reader is familiar with the plot of the text—do not spend time writing a full summary.
- Analysis does not have to be in chronological order.
- As the writer, you should examine, evaluate, unravel, infer, and read between the lines to create your analysis.
- Discuss textual elements in full detail.

Here is an example of summary (to be avoided) and analysis (to be practiced):

Summary: (no inferences...just facts)

Hamlet is one of William Shakespeare's famous tragedies. Many important themes are present in *Hamlet* such as revenge, deception, and loyalty. The play takes place in Denmark, specifically Elsinore Castle. The protagonist of the play is Hamlet. One night, the ghost of Hamlet's newly deceased father confronts Hamlet and explains the cause of his unexpected death: murder! The ghost explains to Hamlet that Denmark—poisoned him. The rest of the play chronicles Hamlet's schemes and attempts to avenge his father's death. By the end of the play, Hamlet successfully kills Claudius. Like a true tragedy, however, Hamlet's revenge results in the loss of his own life.

Analysis: (inferences based off textual evidence)

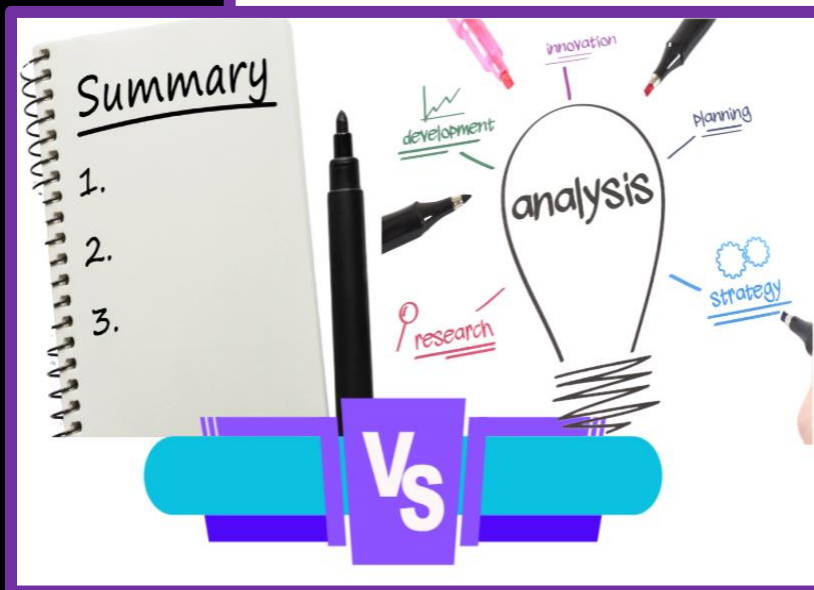
In one of Hamlet's final attempts to use his "madness," he once again tries to find the underlying cause of Gertrude's untrustworthy actions towards his father and himself. In Shakespeare's Closet Scene, Hamlet unleashes a tirade of questions at Gertrude even after slaying Polonius. He connects his rash action of slaying

Polonius with the actions of both Claudius and Gertrude as he screams, "A bloody deed—almost as bad, goodmother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother" (3.4. 27-8).

Hamlet is once again implying to Gertrude that treason consumes Claudius' reign and that she is a primary part of it! He then goes even further to show a connection between his mad deed and her actions. "Good-mother" represents the irony of Gertrude's actions as both a wife and mother in the eyes of Hamlet as he analyzes her sins. Hamlet's mad actions and words are not one of hate towards his

mother. Instead, he is filled with disappointment and knows that he cannot even trust the woman who gave birth to him. He cannot comprehend how the woman who he thought loved his father so dearly could be over his untimely death so quickly. Gertrude's loyalty to Claudius and disloyalty to Hamlet only make the wounds deeper, fueling his performed madness.

The underlined text represents the small amount of background information needed to jumpstart your analysis. The *italicized text* represents textual evidence, while the **bold text** is the **analysis** of the textual evidence. (Note: As seen above, analysis should be longer than the summary).



DICTION, SYNTAX, IMAGERY AND TONE

Diction: A speaker's (or author's) word choice. This term may also refer to the general type or character of language used in speech or a work of literature. What words does the author choose? Consider his/her word choice compared to another. Why did the author choose that particular word? What are the connotations of that word choice?

Examples:

Laugh: guffaw, chuckle, titter, giggle, cackle, snicker, roar

Self-confident: proud, conceited, egotistical, stuck-up, haughty, smug, condescending

Old: mature, experienced, antique, relic, senior, ancient



Syntax: the arrangement – the ordering, grouping, and placement of words within a sentence. Syntax is a part of grammar but *not* a synonym for grammar. For example, the sentences “I rode across the meadow” and “Across the meadow I rode” exhibit different syntax but identical vocabulary. To replace “meadow” with “sea of grass” is to alter the vocabulary but not the syntax. To say “Rode I across the sea of grass” uses diction different from “I rode across the meadow.”

Imagery: A term used to refer to 1) the actual language that a writer uses to describe a visual picture or representation of a sensory experience and 2) the use of figures of speech, often to express abstract ideas in a vivid and original way. The imagery of this second type uses devices such as *simile and personification*, among others. Two major types of imagery exist – the literal and the figurative. Literal imagery is purely descriptive, while figurative may call to mind real things that can be noticed by the senses, but it does so as a way of describing something else- often some abstract idea that cannot be literally or directly described. Whether literal or figurative, however, **imagery is generally intended to make whatever the author describes concrete in the reader's mind**, to give it some tangible or real existence rather than a purely intellectual one. Imagery helps readers understand what the author is talking about. Look for *metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, oxymorons, paradoxes, symbols, irony, puns, and allusions*. Also, look for sound devices like *alliteration, repetition, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, and rhyme*.

Examples:

Simile: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun. (playful)

Alliteration: He clasps the crag with crooked hands. (dramatic)

Irony: Smiling, the boy fell dead. (shocking)

Tone: The attitude of the author toward the reader or the subject matter of a literary work. An author's tone may be *serious, playful, mocking, angry, commanding, apologetic*, and so forth.

Examples of Tone Words:

1. **accusatory** - charging of wrongdoing
2. **apathetic**-indifferent due to lack of energy or concern
3. **awe**-solemn wonder
4. **bitter**-exhibiting strong hatred as a result of pain or grief
5. **cynical** - questions the basic sincerity and goodness of people
6. **condescending**-a feeling of superiority
7. **callous**-unfeeling, insensitive to the feelings of others
8. **contemplative**-studying, thinking, reflecting on an issue
9. **critical**-finding fault
10. **choleric**-hot-tempered, easily angered
11. **contemptuous**-showing or feeling that something is worthless or lacks respect
12. **caustic**-intense use of sarcasm; stinging, biting
13. **conventional**-lacking spontaneity, originality, and individuality
14. **disdainful**-scornful
15. **didactic**-author attempts to educate or instruct the reader
16. **derisive**-ridiculing, mocking
17. **earnest**-intense, a sincere state of mind
18. **erudite**-learned, polished, scholarly
19. **fanciful**-using the imagination
20. **forthright**-directly frank without hesitation
21. **gloomy**-darkness, sadness, rejection
22. **haughty**-proud and vain to the point of arrogance
23. **indignant**-marked by anger aroused by injustice
24. **intimate**-very familiar
25. **judgmental**-authoritative and often having critical opinions
26. **jovial**-happy
27. **lyrical**-expressing a poet's inner feelings; emotional; full of images; song-like
28. **matter-of-fact**- accepting of conditions; not fanciful or emotional
29. **mocking**-treating with contempt or ridicule
30. **morose**-gloomy, sullen, surly, despondent
31. **malicious**-purposely hurtful
32. **objective**-an unbiased view-able to leave personal judgments aside
33. **optimistic**-hopeful, cheerful
34. **obsequious**-polite and obedient to gain something
35. **patronizing**-air of condescension
36. **pessimistic**-seeing the worst side of things; no hope
37. **quizzical**-odd, eccentric, amusing
38. **reverent**-treating a subject with honor and respect
39. **ridiculing**-slightly contemptuous banter; making fun of
40. **reflective**-illustrating innermost thoughts and emotions
41. **sarcastic**-sneering, caustic
42. **sardonic**-scornfully and bitterly sarcastic
43. **satiric**-ridiculing to show weakness to make a point, teach
44. **sincere**-without deceit or pretense; genuine
45. **solemn**-deeply earnest, tending toward sad reflection
46. **sanguineous** -optimistic, cheerful
47. **whimsical**-odd, strange, fantastic; fun

* From *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, second ed. (Murfin, Ray)

IDENTIFYING COMMON ERRORS IN STUDENT WRITING

The following list from the [University of Wisconsin- Madison](#) contains only brief examples and explanations intended for you to use as reminders while you are editing your papers.

1. **Sentence Fragments.** Make sure each word group you have punctuated as a sentence contains a grammatically complete and independent thought that can stand alone as an acceptable sentence.

Incorrect: Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.

Revised: Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the cloth contains the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.

2. **Sentence Sprawl.** Too many equally weighted phrases and clauses produce tiresome sentences.

Incorrect: The hearing was planned for Monday, December 2, but not all of the witnesses could be available, so it was rescheduled for the following Friday. [There are no grammatical errors here, but the sprawling sentence does not communicate clearly and concisely.]

Revised: The hearing, which had been planned for Monday, December 2, was rescheduled for the following so that all witnesses could attend.

3. **Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers.** Place modifiers near the words they describe; be sure the modified words appear in the sentence.

Incorrect: Many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military personnel are buried every day from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Revised: Every day from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military personnel are buried.

4. **Faulty Parallelism.** Be sure you use grammatically equal sentence elements to express two or more matching ideas or items in a series.

Incorrect: The candidate's goals include winning the election, a health program, and education.

Revised: The candidate's goals include winning the election, enacting a national health program, and improving the educational system.

5. **Unclear Pronoun Reference.** Pronouns must clearly refer to definite nouns. Use it, they, that, these, those, and which carefully to prevent confusion.

Incorrect: Einstein was a brilliant mathematician. This is how he was able to explain the workings of the universe.

Revised: Einstein, a brilliant mathematician, used his quantitative ability to explain the workings of the universe.

6. **Pronoun Agreement**. Be sure that each pronoun agrees in number (singular or plural) with the noun to which it refers (its antecedent or referent).

Incorrect: When a candidate runs for office, they must expect to have their personal life scrutinized.

Revised: When candidates run for office, they must expect to have their personal lives scrutinized.

7. **Incorrect Pronoun Case**. Determine whether the pronoun is being used as a subject, object, or possessive in the sentence, and select the pronoun form to match.

Incorrect: Castro's communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between he and President Kennedy.

Revised: Castro's communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between him and President Kennedy.

8. **Missing Commas**. Use commas to signal nonessential material to prevent confusion and to indicate relationships among ideas and sentence parts. Use commas after dependent clauses.

Incorrect: When it comes to eating people differ in their tastes.

Revised: When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.

9. **Unneeded Commas**. Unnecessary commas make sentences difficult to read.

Incorrect: Field trips are required, in several courses, such as, botany and geology.

Revised: Field trips are required in several courses, such as botany and geology.

10. **Comma Splice**. Do not link two independent clauses with a comma (unless you also use a coordinating conjunction and, or, but, for, nor, so yet). Instead use a period or semicolon.

Incorrect: In 1952 Japan's gross national product was one third that of France, by the late 1970s it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.

Revised: In 1952 Japan's gross national product was one third that of France. By the late 1970s it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.

11. **Apostrophe Errors**. Apostrophes indicate possessives and contractions but not plurals. Caution: its, your, their, and whose are possessives (but no apostrophes). It's, you're, they're, and who's are contractions.

Incorrect: In the current conflict its uncertain who's borders their contesting.

Revised: In the current conflict it is [it's] uncertain whose borders they are [they're] contesting.

Incorrect: The Aztecs ritual's of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time. **Revised:** The Aztecs' rituals of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time.

12. **Easily Confused Words**. Effect is most often a noun (the effect) and affect is most often a verb. Other pairs commonly confused: lead/led and accept/except. Check a glossary of usage to find the right choice.

Incorrect: The recession had a negative affect on sales.

Revised: The recession had a negative effect on sales. (or) The recession affected sales negatively.

POWER VERBS

Eliminate “to be” verbs, and use accurate, *active* verbs when writing.

An accurate verb is an action word that describes the kind of action taken. When you write, use the *active voice*. Show clearly who is doing what to whom.

Use action verbs instead of words like "says," "states," "writes," or passive verbs.

ACTIVE (POWER!) VERBS IN ENGLISH ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Accentuates	Bolsters	Creates	Distinguishes	Extrapolates
Accepts	Bombards	Critiques	Distorts	Fantasizes
Achieves	Challenges	Declares	Downplays	Focuses
Adds	Champions	Deduces	Dramatizes	Forces
Adopts	Changes	Defends	Elevates	Foreshadows
Advocates	Characterizes	Defines	Elicits	Forewarns
Affects	Chooses	Defies	Elucidates	Fortifies
Affirms	Chronicles	Delineates	Embodies	Fosters
Alleges	Claims	Demonstrates	Empathizes	Functions
Alleviates	Clarifies	Denigrates	Emphasizes	Hints
Allows	Comments	Denotes	Empowers	Holds
Alludes	Compares	Denounces	Encounters	Honors
Amplifies	Completes	Depicts	Enhances	Generalizes
Analogizes	Concerns	Describes	Enlightens	Guides
Analyzes	Concludes	Details	Enriches	Heightens
Approaches	Condemns	Determines	Enumerates	Highlights
Argues	Condescends	Develops	Envisions	Identifies
Ascertains	Conducts	Deviates	Escalates	Illuminates
Asserts	Conforms	Differentiates	Establishes	Illustrates
Assesses	Confronts	Differs	Evokes	Imagines
Assails	Connotes	Direct	Evaluates	Impels
Assumes	Considers	Disappoints	Excludes	Implements
Attacks	Constrains	Discern	Exhibits	Implies
Attempts	Constructs	Discovers	Expands	Includes
Attests	Contends	Discusses	Experiences	Indicates
Attributes	Contests	Dispels	Explains	Infers
Augments	Contradicts	Displays	Explicates	Initiates
Avoids	Contributes	Disputes	Expresses	Inspires
Bases	Conveys	Disrupts	Exemplifies	Intends
Believes	Convinces	Dissuades	Extends	Intensifies

Interprets	Observes	Produces	Regards	Summarizes
Interrupts	Opines	Projects	Regrets	Supplies
Introduces	Opposes	Promotes	Relates	Supports
Inundates	Organizes	Proposes	Reinforces	Suppresses
Juxtaposes	Outlines	Provides	Rejects	Sustains
Justifies	Overstates	Provokes	Remarks	Symbolizes
Lampoons	Paints	Purports	Represents	Sympathizes
Lists	Patronizes	Qualifies	Repudiates	Traces
Maintains	Performs	Questions	Reveals	Transcends
Magnifies	Permeates	Rationalizes	Reverts	Transforms
Manages	Permits	Reasons	Ridicules	Understands
Manipulates	Personifies	Recalls	Satirizes	Understates
Masters	Persuades	Recapitulates	Sees	Unpacks
Meanders	Pervades	Recites	Selects	Uses
Minimizes	Ponders	Recollects	Serves	Vacillates
Moralizes	Portrays	Records	Solidifies	Values
Motivates	Postulates	Recounts	Specifies	Verifies
Muses	Predicts	Reflects	Speculates	Views
Notes	Prepares	Refers	States	Wants
	Presents	Refutes	Strives	Wishes
	Presumes	Regales	Suggests	

**Words to *AVOID* in academic writing. This is a starter list.
It will grow!**

A lot	Great	Ways
Very	Definitely	Really
Many	Extremely	Absolutely
Things	Nice	Interesting
Lots	Wonderful	Bad
Stuff	Awesome	Amazing

GLOSSARY OF LITERARY & WRITING TERMS

Authors and poets use many different techniques when they write. These techniques help to communicate ideas and create memorable works of literature. As students become more familiar with these terms, they will begin to use them in their own writing.

1. **Analogy** – the comparison of two similar things to suggest that they are alike in some respects; they are probably alike in other ways as well
2. **Antagonist** - a person who is opposed to, struggles against, or competes with another; an opponent
3. **Apostrophe** - more commonly known as a punctuation mark, an apostrophe can also refer to an exclamatory figure of speech. The definition of apostrophe as a literary device is when a speaker breaks off from addressing one party and instead addresses a third party.
4. **Archetype** - a typical character, an action, or a situation that seems to represent common patterns of human nature
5. **Atmosphere** - a feeling that readers get from a narrative based on details such as settings, background, objects, and foreshadowing
6. **Characterization**
 - a. Flat character -an underdeveloped character who does not change
 - b. Round character - a fully developed character, just like a person in real life
7. **Conflict** - a literary element that involves a struggle between two opposing forces, usually a protagonist and an antagonist
 - a. Internal - a conflict/difficulty *within* the characters themselves
 - b. External - struggle between the protagonist and another character, against nature, or some other outside force
8. **Connotation** - meaning and emotions associated with a word that goes beyond its dictionary definition
9. **Context** – the words surrounding a particular word that help determine its meaning
10. **Critique** - a critical examination of a work of art to determine its nature and how it measures up to established standards
11. **Denotation** - the literal or basic meaning of a word; the dictionary meaning of a word
12. **Dialogue** – a conversation between two or more people or characters

13. **Diction** – a style of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words by a speaker or a writer
14. **Drama** – a play for a theater, television, or radio. A plot is acted through dialogue and performance.
- Soliloquy is a technique often used in drama to reveal a character's innermost thoughts. It is a great technique for conveying the progress of the action of the play by expressing a character's thoughts about a certain character or past, present, or upcoming event while talking to himself without acknowledging the presence of any other person.
 - Aside is a short comment or speech that a character delivers directly to the audience or himself that other characters on the stage cannot hear. Only the audience is supposed to hear what is said.
15. **Dynamic character** - in literature or drama, a character who undergoes a permanent change in outlook or character during the story
16. **Plot** - the action or events of the story (what happens)
- Exposition – the information the reader gets at the beginning of the story
 - Raising action - the central part of the story leading up to the climax
 - Climax - the point of highest interest or dramatic intensity; the turning point
 - Falling action - the part of the story that is after the climax or turning point leading to the end of the story
 - Resolution (Denouement) - when the climax or conflict is solved; the outcome of a play or story
17. **Figurative language** - words or phrases that do not mean what they first appear to mean that are used in a particular way to create a special effect
- Alliteration - the repetition of consonant sounds
 - Allusion- referring to another literary work or historical event
 - Assonance - when two or more words close to one another repeat the same vowel sound but start with different consonant sounds.
 - Consonance - refers to repetitive sounds produced by consonants within a sentence or phrase. This repetition often takes place right after another in a quick pattern.
 - Cliché - a word or phrase that is overused and boring to the reader
 - Euphemism - replacing one word or phrase with another to avoid being offensive
 - Flashback – when a writer interrupts the main action of a story to recreate a situation from an earlier time
 - Foreshadowing - hints and clues that tip the reader off as to what is to happen later
 - Hyperbole - an exaggeration in literature
 - Imagery - using figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas that appeal to our physical senses
 - Metaphor - comparing two things based on similar traits
 - Onomatopoeia – the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named
 - Personification - gives human characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or ideas

- n. Pun - a word or phrase with a "double meaning" as intended by the writer; often, these words sound the same (or almost the same) but have different meanings.
 - o. Simile - compares two things using the words "like" and "as."
 - p. Symbolism - an object that stands for or represents something else
18. **Figure of speech** - a phrase or word having different meanings than its literal meanings. It delivers meaning by identifying or comparing one thing to another, with meanings familiar to the audience.
19. **Foil** - a character who contrasts (is the opposite) of another character to highlight the character personalities
20. **Genre** - the *type* of literature a story is
- a. Allegory – the representation of ideas or moral principles using symbolic characters, events, or objects
 - b. Anecdote -a short narrative that tells the particulars of an interesting and/or humorous event
 - c. Comedy – a play that ends happily, in which the main character gets what he or she wants
 - d. Editorial - a short essay in a newspaper or magazine that expresses the opinion of the writer
 - e. Essay - a piece of writing that expresses an individual's point of view; it is a series of closely related paragraphs that discuss a single topic
 - f. Epic – a long narrative poem about a great hero's adventures. Epics embody the beliefs of the people who tell them.
 - g. Fable - a brief tale told to point to a moral
 - h. Historical fiction - fiction whose setting is in some time other than that in which it is written, using facts and settings from actual events
 - i. Myth – traditional stories rooted in a particular culture that usually explain a belief, a ritual, or a mysterious natural occurrence
 - j. Parable- a short descriptive story whose purpose is to teach a lesson or moral
 - k. Parody - when an author imitates or makes fun of another serious text or type of literature
 - l. Satire - a piece of writing that criticizes (makes fun of) politics and social institutions by holding them up to ridicule
 - m. Short story - a brief fictional narrative (500-12,00 words)
 - n. Novel - covering a wide range of narrative materials that have two common characteristics: they are lengthy and fictional
21. **Irony**:
- a. Dramatic – the audience knows more than the characters in the play so words and actions have additional meaning for the audience.
 - b. Situational - set of circumstances or a result that is the opposite of what might be expected; when the audience/reader does not expect the outcome of a situation.
 - c. Verbal- a figure of speech in which what is said is the opposite of what is meant

22. **Monologue** - a long speech made by one character to other characters onstage
23. **Mood** - the general overall feeling given by the atmosphere and setting
24. **Narrator** – the person who is telling the story
25. **Paradox** – a statement that at first seems false but is true
26. **Poetry** - a collection of spoken or written words that expresses ideas or emotions in a powerfully vivid and imaginative style, written with a particular rhythmic and metrical pattern. In fact, it is a literary technique that is different from prose or ordinary speech, as it is either in metric pattern or in free verse.
- Rhyme scheme – a pattern of rhyme in lines of poetry, denoted using letters, as in ABAB CDCD EE
 - Rhythm is a musical quality in poetry that comes from the alternating of stressed and unstressed sounds that make the voice rise and fall.
 - Blank verse – unrhymed, but otherwise regular verse, usually iambic pentameter
 - Couplet – in poetry (verse), two consecutive lines that rhyme
 - Free verse - a literary device that can be defined as poetry that is free from regular meter or rhythm limitations and does not rhyme with fixed forms.
 - Heroic couplet – two consecutive lines of rhymed verse written in iambic pentameter.
 - Iambic Pentameter a line of poetry that contains five iambic feet; an iamb is a foot consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable.
 - Lyric – a short poem that expresses personal feelings and thoughts of a speaker
 - Sonnet – a poem of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter that follows one of several rhyme schemes
27. **Point of view** - from whose angle the story is being told
- First person - when a character in the story tells the story using "I" or "we."
 - Second person - used in nonfiction, primarily to write instructions or directions for "you," the reader.
 - Third person- when the narrator is telling the events from "outside" the story from a neutral or unemotional viewpoint using "he" or "she."
 - Omniscient - when the narrator can see into the hearts and minds of more than one of the characters in the story
 - Third person limited - when the narrator can see into the heart and mind of only *ONE* of the characters in the story
 - Unreliable - learns about their situation along with the reader and cannot be trusted to describe what's really happening
28. **Protagonist** - the leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work
29. **Rhetorical question** – a question asked only for effect or to make a statement, but not to get an answer.

30. **Setting** – the time and place of a story
31. **Static character** – one who remains unchanged throughout a work
32. **Structure** – the planned organization a writer creates for his/her piece of text
33. **Style** – the particular way a writer uses language. This is revealed through diction (word choice), sentence structure, and tone.
34. **Syntax** - a set of rules in a language. It dictates how words from different parts of speech are put together to show a complete thought.
35. **Tone**- the author’s attitude or feelings about the subject.
36. **Theme** – the general idea or opinion about human life that a work of literature reveals.
 - a. Universal themes - literary work’s message or central idea that is timeless
 - b. Motif - recurring ideas, images, and actions that tend to unify a work (story) and help to identify the theme.
37. **Tragedy** – a play that presents serious and important actions and ends unhappily for the main characters.
 - a. Tragic Hero - a literary character who makes an error of judgment or has a fatal flaw that, combined with fate and external forces
 - b. Hamartia - a personal error in a protagonist’s personality that brings about his tragic downfall or failure in a tragedy. This defect in a hero’s personality is also known as a “tragic flaw.”
 - c. Tragic flaw—a trait in a character that leads to his downfall, even though the character is often the hero of the literary piece. This trait could be a lack of self-knowledge or judgment, and often, it is hubris(pride).
 - d. Hubris (pride) - extreme pride and arrogance shown by a character that ultimately brings about his downfall.
38. **Writer’s voice** - The writer’s awareness and effective use of such elements as diction, tone, syntax, unity, consistency, and audience to create a clear and distinct "personality of the writer."

APPENDIX

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Sample Persuasive Graphic Organizer

Topic: Riding a bike for any trip under five miles	Purpose: To persuade people to use bicycles for shorter trips	Audience: People who overuse cars and under-utilize bicycles for short trips
Thesis Statement: You'll save money and time by riding a bike; even in the winter months, people should use bikes for short trips instead of cars.		
Claim/Counterclaim	Evidence	Elaboration
While some may argue that bicycling is an expensive hobby, riding a bike can be quite cost effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current gas prices • Price of bike and accessories in comparison to cost of regular car maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparing the one-time cost of bike accessories to continued purchase of gas for a five-mile commute (show math)
Although riding a bike lengthens the time required for a long commute, riding a bike over a short distance saves time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Convenience • Multi-tasking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average time of a five-mile commute vs. average speed of a biker on same commute •]No worrying about parking, no filling up on gas, etc. • You can exercise and commute simultaneously.
While winter roads might be dangerous, riding a bike in winter can be both safe and feasible.	According to icebike.org survey, very few accidents are reported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to summer accidents, winter apparel provides protection.
Emotional Appeal		
<p>Many Americans are fearful of being overweight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon emissions are slowly killing our planet. • Riding a bike recalls happy childhood memories. 		
Conclusion: Associate biking with rediscovering childhood freedom.		

Persuasive Graphic Organizer

Topic:	Purpose:	Audience:
Thesis Statement:		
Claim/Counterclaim	Evidence	Elaboration
Emotional Appeal		
Conclusion:		

Sample Outline for Persuasive Essay

Thesis: You'll save money and time by riding a bike; even in the winter months, people should use bikes for short trips instead of cars.

I. Cost

- A.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- B.
 - 1.
 - 2.

II. Time

- A.
 - 1.
 - 2.

- B.
 - 1.
 - 2.

III. Safety in winter

A. Accidents [Evidence]

- 1. Summer [Elaboration]
- 2. Winter [Elaboration]

B. Injuries [Evidence]

- 1. Summer: Exposed limbs subject to road rash [Elaboration]
- 2. Winter: Protective apparel [Elaboration]

Sample Persuasive Essay

Introduction

Italicized = *Attention Getter* / Underlined = Context / **Bolded** = **Thesis Statement**

According to most statistics, if you, the reader, are an American, you're likely overweight. In these tough economic times, your weight and the weight of your wallet are probably inversely proportional to one another; the more you eat and spend on gas, the less likely you are to save money. And all that gas you're pumping into your car is just killing our planet slowly. In order to prevent much future distress for you, me, and our neighbors on this planet, I offer a simple solution for both saving money and time: ride a bike. Any bike. That old junky mountain bike you've had in your garage for eight years? Yeah, that bike. Take it down off the garage wall, and pump that free air into the flat tires. The next time you start up that environment killer of a car, even in the winter, consider busting out your underused, undervalued, and underappreciated bike—for any trip under five miles. You'll save money and time by riding a bike; even in the winter months, people should use bikes for short trips instead of cars.

Body Paragraph

Normal = Transition / **Bolded** = **Topic Sentence** / Underlined = Evidence / *Italicized* = *Elaboration*

There is no doubt that summer is the best time to begin this transformation of your body and wallet; however, I'm sure you'll balk at the suggestion that your bike can—and should—be just as useful in January. **Even on cold winter days, your first choice of transportation for short trips should still be your bicycle. You may ask: isn't winter riding dangerous?** Actually, a survey of winter bikers conducted through Icebike.org in 1999 suggests otherwise. When asked —What was your worst cycling accident?| only 4% of the 403 respondents cited 35 injuries that required medical attention. An astounding 50% experienced minor falls with no injury, and 21% experienced no falls at all (icebike.org). Apparently winter riding isn't as dangerous as you'd think. Consider this: Even if you do fall, it won't be as bad as it could be in the summer. In the summer, bare arms and legs are exposed to road rash on falls that otherwise wouldn't occur in the winter; your layers will protect your skin from road rash. In many ways, winter riding may actually be safer than summer riding.

Conclusion

Bolded = **Restated Thesis Statement** / *Italicized* = *Synthesis* / Underlined = Extension

Even in the winter, there are no excuses for not making short trips on a bicycle. *The money you spend on accessories (which will last years) that make biking a comfortable and reasonable form of transportation will be outweighed by the money you save on gas and maintenance expenses over the same time period, not to mention the decrease in your ecological footprint. Additionally, concerns about the commute being longer are nullified by the fact that you are, in essence, multi-tasking by simultaneously commuting and exercising, activities that we tend to view as mutually exclusive. Ultimately, the most important benefit to remember is your ensuing happiness once you recommit to your bike. Remember how much fun you had as a kid riding your bike around the neighborhood? That freedom is hanging there in your garage, waiting to be rediscovered, hoping that—one day soon—your feet will finally grace its pedals once more.*

Sentence Templates + Transitions for Beginning to Write Arguments

from Graff and Birkenstein's *They Say, I Say*

Remember: the templates below are meant to “be direct with [you] about the key moves that [critical thinking] comprises” (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). Think of them as moves in a video game or a sport—the better we get at the game or sport, the more comfortable we get with knowing when and how to use a move best. With that said, play around with these, notice how they are used in the writings of others, and determine that you will grow as an arguer this year.

Introducing What an Author Says

- X acknowledges that _____.
- X agrees that _____.
- X argues that _____.
- X believes that _____.
- X denies/does not deny that _____.
- X claims that _____.
- X complains that _____.
- X concedes that _____.
- X demonstrates that _____.
- X celebrates the fact that _____.
- X insists that _____.
- X questions whether _____.
- X reminds us that _____.
- X reports that _____.
- X suggests that _____.

Introducing “Standard Views”

- Americans today tend to believe that _____.
- Common sense seems to say that _____.
- It is often said that _____.
- Many people assume that _____.

Introducing an Ongoing Debate

- In discussions of _____, one controversial issue has been _____.
- On the one hand, _____ argues _____. On the other hand, _____ opposes _____. Others even believe _____. My own view is _____.
- When it comes to the topic of _____, most of us will readily agree that _____. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of _____. While some are convinced that _____, others believe that _____.

Using a Quotation (i.e., Backing up your argument with proof)

- X states, “_____” ().
- According to X, “_____” ().
- X himself writes, “_____” ().
- In his book, _____, X maintains that “_____” ().
- Writing in the magazine _____, X complains that “_____” ().
- X agrees when she writes, “_____” ().

Explaining a Quotation (i.e., Showing that you understand what the quote says)

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
- X's point is that _____.
- The essence of X's argument is that _____.

Naming Your Naysayers or Opponents (i.e., Introducing your rebuttal)

- Here many _____ would probably object that _____.
- Nevertheless, critics of _____ will probably argue that _____.
- Although not all _____s think alike, some of them will probably dispute my claim that _____.

Making a Concession (i.e., They have a point, BUT...)

- Admittedly, _____.
- Proponents of X are right to argue that _____. But they are exaggerating when they claim that _____.
- While it is true that _____, it does not necessary follow that _____.
- On the one hand, X is right to say _____. On the other hand, it is still true that _____.

Transitions

For ADDING IDEAS:

<i>also</i>	<i>equally</i>	<i>furthermore</i>	<i>in addition</i>
<i>another</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>additionally</i>	
<i>in fact</i>	<i>moreover</i>	<i>indeed</i>	

For MAKING A CONTRAST:

<i>however</i>	<i>conversely</i>	<i>even though</i>	<i>by contrast</i>
<i>nevertheless</i>	<i>on the contrary</i>	<i>all the same</i>	<i>nonetheless</i>
<i>although</i>	<i>notwithstanding</i>	<i>on the other hand</i>	

For COMPARING:

<i>likewise</i>	<i>equally</i>	<i>along the same lines</i>
<i>similarly</i>	<i>in comparison</i>	<i>in the same way</i>

For CITING AN EXAMPLE:

<i>for example</i>	<i>in other words</i>	<i>in fact</i>
<i>for instance</i>	<i>specifically</i>	<i>after all</i>
<i>as an illustration</i>	<i>consider</i>	

For SHOWING RESULTS:

<i>accordingly</i>	<i>hence</i>	<i>consequently</i>
<i>as a result</i>	<i>thus</i>	<i>therefore</i>

For REINFORCING AN IDEA:

<i>especially important</i>	<i>above all</i>	<i>most noteworthy</i>
<i>especially relevant</i>	<i>a significant factor</i>	<i>most of all</i>

For ELABORATING (expanding upon a point):

<i>actually</i>	<i>in short</i>	<i>ultimately</i>
<i>by extension</i>	<i>to put it succinctly</i>	<i>basically</i>
<i>to put it another way</i>	<i>in other words</i>	

For CONCEDEDING A POINT:

<i>admittedly</i>	<i>although it is true that</i>	<i>granted</i>
<i>of course</i>	<i>naturally</i>	<i>to be sure</i>

For CONCLUDING:

<i>clearly</i>	<i>obviously</i>	<i>in short</i>
<i>hence</i>	<i>therefore</i>	<i>all in all</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>thus</i>	

Quotation Sandwich Template

QUOTE GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Title: Author:	Prompt: (Write it out here)
1. Focus Sentence [1 sentence]: (Fill in the title and the author...remember to use quotation marks if the title is an article, underline if it is a book!) According to _____ in _____	
2. Context [2-3 sentences]: (Background info that sets up the quote. Re-tell a little bit of the text to help the reader understand your focus.)	
3. Quote [1-2 sentence(s)]: (Don't forget your page number! – See resources for using quotes) According to the author, “	
4. Return Back to Focus [1 sentence]: Restate focus using one of these specific phrases: 1. This shows that...2. As you can see...3. This quote proves...4. This evidence led me to believe...5. Your own words (approved by teacher)...	
5. Analysis: Explain how the quote relates to your focus [3-5 sentences]: (Give examples from the text and refer back to the words in the quote to help you elaborate the importance of the quote.)	

How to Spot Misinformation from The News Literacy Project

IN BRIEF ○○○○

Misinformation

Misinformation thrives on social media where anyone can share almost anything they choose, and attention spans are short. Here's a quick guide to help you understand what misinformation is and how to recognize it.

Why do people share misinformation?

Many people share misinformation unknowingly and sometimes with good or altruistic intentions – whether to articulate their perspectives, warn others away from danger or join others in trying to make sense of the world around them.

But some research suggests that some people also knowingly share things they suspect are false – whether to damage “the other side” in a political debate, get social media likes and shares, or conform to their ideological identities.

Bad actors – such as hyperpartisans, trolls and even foreign agents – create and share disinformation to cause division and confusion, to promote political interests and points of view or for financial gain.

Misinformation:

Information that is misleading, erroneous or false. Misinformation is generally shared – and sometimes created – by people who are unaware that it's inaccurate. This is the best term to use when the intent of the creator or sharer is unknown.

Disinformation:

A subset of misinformation that is deliberately created or shared with the intention to misinform and mislead others, usually to achieve a desired ideological, political or financial result.

Types

Misinformation can be categorized based on what makes it false or misleading. The following five types are commonly found online:

False context

An image, video, quote or other piece of content is presented in a new, false context that changes its meaning.

Imposter content

Content – such as a fake tweet from a public figure, or a fake ad – that falsely uses a well-known name, brand or logo to fool people into believing that it is authentic.

Fabricated content

Misinformation that is entirely made up, such as computer-generated imagery or entirely fictional reports presented as “news.”

Manipulated content

Photos, videos, graphics and other types of content that have been “doctored” in some way, such as having one or more elements artificially added or removed.

Stolen satire

A specific type of “false context” misinformation in which all or part of a piece of satire is presented as authentic.

Red flags

WATCH OUT!

If you see these common misinformation themes and “tumor cases,” proceed with caution:

Phrases

- “Let that sink in”
- “The media won't report this”
- “Make this go viral”
- “Do your own research”
- “There are no coincidences”

Patterns

- Manipulated text on signs or t-shirts
- Doctored “amazing” nature or space photos
- Photos of protests and crowds
- Screenshots of articles with no links

Your best defenses

- Checking out unfamiliar people and sources
- Glancing through social media comments for replies that call a post into question
- A quick internet search using key terms from a questionable post

Key resources

- “Misinformation” lesson from NLP's Checkology® virtual classroom
- NLP's weekly email newsletters: [The Sell!](#) (for educators) and [Get Smart About News](#) (for non-educators)
- NLP's [Misinformation!](#)
- [Fact Check website](#)
- [The Media Manipulation Casebook](#)

BREAKING

NEWS

CHECKLIST

What to do when information is scarce, falsehoods are rampant and the story is still unfolding

1 MIND THE GAP

WHEN BIG NEWS BREAKS, EVERYONE WANTS THE DETAILS, but verified information can be tough to find. **BE MINDFUL** that a deluge of unconfirmed, misleading and completely bogus content often rushes in to fill the gap between what's available and what the public wants to know.

2 BEWARE BAD ACTORS

BAD ACTORS NEED ATTENTION TO THRIVE, so they often capitalize on breaking news situations to spread sensationalized or false content for cheap likes and shares. In times of war, natural disasters and upheaval, misinformation also acts as a tool to advance certain narratives and shape public opinion.

DON'T BE EXPLOITED. Slow down and resist the urge to share unconfirmed claims or visuals.

3 DO A QUICK SEARCH

A QUICK INTERNET SEARCH IS OFTEN THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST MISINFORMATION. Hop off social media and do a simple search to investigate unsubstantiated claims and unfamiliar sources. **BEWARE** of shocking news updates circulating among ordinary social media users but not in news coverage. Credible news sources will cover major updates.

4 LOOK FOR EVIDENCE

CLAIMS THAT MAKE BOLD ASSERTIONS BUT PROVIDE NO LINKS OR OTHER EVIDENCE should always be **APPROACHED WITH CAUTION**, especially screenshots. If a social media post does include an outside link – to a news report, study or some other source – **make sure the link actually supports claims in the original post.**

5 SEEK CREDIBLE SOURCES

IT'S IMPORTANT TO ACTIVELY SEEK OUT NEWS FROM CREDIBLE SOURCES and not rely on social media algorithms to bring you updates. **BE INTENTIONAL** about following professional journalists on the ground.

Look for reputable news organizations and fact-checkers debunking falsehoods in real time. Compare coverage across multiple credible news outlets and pay special attention to attribution. Is information attributed to sources in a position to know? Does the report independently verify disputed details or simply repeat information from officials?

6 PRACTICE PATIENCE

QUALITY JOURNALISM AND VERIFICATION TAKE TIME. Journalists have to interview people, gather documentation and confirm details with multiple sources. It might take days or even weeks to untangle initial accounts or investigate claims involving a major story. **BE READY** to follow news developments over time, knowing that the story – and your understanding of it – will likely evolve as more verified information comes to light.

TIP It's common for old or unrelated visuals to circulate out of context in breaking news situations. **Reverse image searches** can help put repurposed visuals back in their original context.

TIP Credible news sources aspire to **ethical guidelines and standards**, including accuracy, transparency and independence. Look for evidence that a source follows such standards.

News Literacy Project
newslit.org
For a future founded on facts

Is it legit?

Five steps for vetting a news source

Many sources compete for attention online, including partisan blogs and bogus sites posing as legitimate news organizations. It can be tough to know what to trust. Follow these steps to cut through the noise and learn how to evaluate sources for signs of credibility – as well as for red flags that signal a source should be avoided.

Test your source savvy!

Scan this QR code to put your source-vetting skills to the test.



1

Do a quick search

Conducting a simple search for information about a news source is a key first step in evaluating its credibility. It's important to look beyond social media. Go to a search engine and plug in the name of the website or publication. Do other legitimate sources, such as standards-based news organizations or [fact-checking websites](#), describe this publication as *unreliable*? *Satirical*? Is it a state-run propaganda "news" site? If so, there's no need to spend more time vetting. Look elsewhere for reliable information.

➤ **Tip:** Wikipedia can be a good place to start and lead you to relevant source links; just keep in mind that some credible local newsrooms may not have an entry there. You can also see if a source has been vetted for inclusion on news aggregators, such as [Google News](#), [Apple News](#) and [SmartNews](#).

2

Look for standards

Reputable news organizations aspire to ethical guidelines and standards, including fairness, accuracy and independence. These standards should be available publicly – often in the form of editorial policies or a code of ethics. Look for evidence that a source follows such standards. If someone is mentioned in a critical story, for instance, did the journalist give that person a chance to comment?

➤ **Note:** Some professional journalism standards are commonly shared across the industry, such as the [Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#). Other policies are unique to different newsrooms.

Beware of these trust busters!

If you spot any of these problems, look elsewhere for credible news.

✗ **False or untrue content:**
Publishing a demonstrably false claim without correcting it

✗ **Clickbait tactics:**
"Baiting" you with sensationalized language, including misleading or exaggerated headlines, or headlines that are purposely vague to drive clicks

✗ **Lack of balance:**
Consistently focusing on one angle or side of a legitimate debate or controversy, while ignoring or distorting other perspectives

✗ **Manipulated images or videos**
Tip: You can do a [reverse image search](#) using



and [Yandex](#) (among other tools) to see if visuals have been misrepresented or altered in some way.

✗ **State-run or state-sponsored propaganda:**
Using government-controlled news organizations to further national agendas and improve public image

✗ **Dangerous, offensive and malicious content:**
Could include discriminatory language, unverified pseudoscience, content that promotes violence or coverage that – as the SPJ Code of Ethics states – panders "to lurid curiosity"

3

Check for transparency

Quality news sources should be transparent, not only about their reporting practices (see Step 2), but also about their ownership and funding. Is it clear who owns and runs this website or publication? Is advertising labeled responsibly? Can you tell who is writing and producing content? Is there a way to contact newsroom editors and reporters?

➤ **Remember:** "About" pages can provide some of these details, but they can also be misleading and omit important information (about a source's ownership or lack of independence, for example). [Don't be fooled](#) by a [sleek web design](#), or trust the "About" page on an unfamiliar site without further verification. If something seems suspicious, check it out.

4

Examine how errors are handled

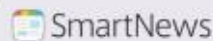
Credible news sources are accountable for mistakes and correct them. Do you see evidence that this source corrects or clarifies errors?

5

Assess news coverage

An important step in vetting sources is taking time to read and assess several news articles. Do you see original reporting? Do they provide straight news reports, or just commentary and opinion? Are there grammatical and/or spelling errors? How do news articles from this source compare to coverage from other standards-based newsrooms on this same topic? Many people have strong opinions about news sources without evaluating them firsthand.

➤ **Tip:** Take note of bylines (names) on news coverage. These bylines can help you confirm that this coverage was written or produced by professional journalists. Bylines are also a sign of transparency and accountability.



This infographic was created by the News Literacy Project in partnership with SmartNews, a news app for mobile devices.

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