Prewriting / Outlining Workshop

Brought to you by the PCCC Writing Center (2013)

Step 1: Determine the requirements for your assignment.

- What type of paper are you writing? (analytical, expository, argumentative)
- What is the topic/focus of your paper? In other words, what do you want this paper to accomplish and what kinds of questions must be addressed? Do you need to use outside sources or do additional research?

Step 2: Answer the question. Decide what direction your essay will take. Brainstorm supporting points.

- Write an initial thesis statement that answers the assignment question. Include supporting points that you can later develop. Consider the questions of Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How?
- If you are using outside sources, highlight or make a note of quotations and other facts/passages you may want to paraphrase in your essay. What ideas/points do they support?

Step 3: Organize your essay. Consider order of development. Create a basic/detailed outline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Include any relevant definitions and background information. If you are analyzing a particular essay/story, make sure to include title and author information and a brief summary of the work. If writing an argumentative paper, consider giving background on the opposing side of the argument. In your thesis, answer the assignment question and include the supporting points you will later develop in your body paragraphs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td><strong>Topic Sentence</strong>: What is the main idea of this paragraph?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td><strong>Supporting Evidence</strong>: What examples can you give that support the main idea of this paragraph? What quotations or statistics can you provide to enhance credibility? Also remember to analyze this evidence. Explain the relevance of your examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Concluding Sentence</strong>: Summarize the major points of this paragraph / write a sentence that transitions the reader from this paragraph to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>What ideas do you want to leave the reader with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarize your major points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brainstorming Techniques

Consider purpose and audience

✓ What is your purpose? What verb captures your intent? Are you trying to inform, convince, or describe? Write about why you are writing this draft.
✓ Who is your audience (beyond the grader)? What does that audience already know and what do they need to know (and in what order)? Write about who you are writing to and what they need.

Note taking

✓ Take notes whenever you read, hear, or think of something relevant to your paper. Use different index cards or different sheets of paper for different ideas or aspects of your research in order to keep your thoughts organized. It may also be helpful to separate ideas from different sources.

Listing

✓ Write down your topic, and then write out everything that you can think of that is related to your topic.
✓ You can also create multiple lists on various subtopics (the opposite claim or a smaller issue under the bigger topic).

Clustering (Mapping/Webbing)
Clustering takes ideas and shows how they are connected to each other and the main topic.

✓ Take your sheet(s) of paper and write your main topic in the center, using a word (or two or three). Moving out from the center, start to write down as many related concepts or terms as you can associate with the central topic. Jot them down quickly, move into another space, jot some more. If you run out of similar concepts, jot down opposites or things that are only slightly related.
✓ Begin clustering. Circle terms that seem related and draw lines connecting the circles. Find some more terms, circle them, and draw more lines to connect them. When you run out of terms that associate, start with another term. Continue this process until you have found all the associated terms. Some of the terms might end up uncircled, but these “loners” can also be useful to you.

Freewriting

✓ Freewriting is where you write for 5 or more minutes on your topic without stopping, thinking, or worrying about grammar, spelling, or anything else. This process allows you to clear out some of your bad ideas before you start writing, and it can even help you to find really good ideas that you didn’t know you had.

Cubing
Cubing enables you to consider your topic from six different directions/approaches. Take a sheet of paper, consider your topic, and respond to these six commands.

✓ Describe it.
✓ Compare it.
✓ Associate it.
✓ Analyze it.
✓ Apply it.
✓ Argue for and against it.
Look over what you’ve written. Do any of the responses suggest anything new about your topic? What interactions do you notice among the “sides”? That is, do you see patterns repeating, or a theme emerging that you could use to approach the topic or draft a thesis?

Journalistic questions
In this technique you would use the “big six” questions that journalists rely on to thoroughly research a story. The six are: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How?.

✓ Write each question word on a sheet of paper, leaving space between them. Then, write out some sentences or phrases in answer, as they fit your particular topic.

✓ Now look over your responses. Do you have more to say about one or two of the questions or are your answers for each question well balanced in depth and content? Was there one question that you had absolutely no answer for? How might this help you to decide how to frame your thesis or to organize your paper? Or, how might it reveal what you must work on further (additional research)?

Outlining
✓ Outlining consists of creating a heading and putting your ideas, evidence, or resources under those headings so that you have a true sense of your paper’s layout. Outlining allows you to see what order to place your ideas and where you can fit outside sources. Generally, an outline looks similar to this:

Topic: Cats

Thesis: In this paper, I will argue that cats......

A. Costs of keeping a cat
   1. Food
   2. Research shows that cat food can cost up to 5,000 dollars per year

B. Health concerns for cats and their owners
   1. Declawing
   2. Neutering

Thinking outside the box
✓ When writing for a particular course, take advantage of your knowledge in other subject areas. How might you see and understand the same topic differently if you were writing for an English class versus a science class? For example, when discussing “culture” in your history course, you could incorporate the definition of “culture” that is frequently used in the biological sciences. Petri dishes are used to “culture” substances for bacterial growth and analysis; here, “culture” is a medium upon which certain things will grow and develop while other things will be hindered in their growth.

Dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias
✓ Browse various dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias. Turn to your most important terms and see what sort of variety you find in the definitions. Are there varying definitions for this concept that will allow you to think about this term from a newer, richer point of view?
Writing the 5-Paragraph Essay Workshop

Brought to you by the PCCC Writing Center (2013)

Paragraph 1: Introduction

- The introductory paragraph must introduce the topic to your reader. Try to engage the interest of your reader while staying focused on your assignment/topic. Give some background information on your topic. Introduce any necessary titles or authors. If it is an argumentative essay, consider discussing the opposition’s argument.

- Your introduction must include a thesis statement (usually at the end of the introductory paragraph). The thesis is the main point you are making about the topic (the reason you are writing the paper). It should be a narrow, focused, and specific assertion. It should include/encompass the supporting points you will later develop in your essay.

Paragraph 2-4: Body Paragraphs

- Typically, the thesis will refer to three examples/reasons for support. These supporting points are then developed in each body paragraph.

- It is often helpful to consider this kind of format for your body paragraphs:

  Topic Sentence: What is the main idea of this paragraph?

  Supporting Evidence: What examples can you give that support the main idea of this paragraph? What quotations or statistics can you provide to enhance credibility? Also remember to analyze this evidence. Explain the relevance of your examples.

  Concluding Sentence: Summarize the major points of this paragraph OR write a sentence that transitions the reader from this paragraph to the next.

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

- Your conclusion should wrap everything up. It often summarizes the major points of your essay and restates your thesis in different words.

- Often, you can end with a parting statement that gives the reader something to think about or take with him/her.
5-Paragraph Essay Outline

Topic/Title:

Introduction (What background information can you provide here? What will “hook” the reader’s interest?):

Thesis Statement (What is your position on this topic?):

Three Supporting Points:

1.

2.

3.

Body Paragraph 1 (Supporting Point #1)

Topic Sentence:

Supporting Details:

1.

2.

Concluding Sentence:
Body Paragraph 2 (Supporting Point #2)

Topic Sentence:

Supporting Details:

1.

2.

Concluding Sentence:

Body Paragraph 3 (Supporting Point #3)

Topic Sentence:

Supporting Details:

1.

2.

Concluding Sentence:

Conclusion (Restate your thesis in different words; What ideas do you want to leave the reader with?):
Hints for Taking Essay Exams

Brought to you by the PCCC Writing Center (2013)

1. **Be Prepared**
   Predict possible essay items by reviewing your text and handouts from class. Review old exams and essays to get an idea of the types of questions that might be asked and what kinds of responses the instructor is looking for. Practice brainstorming and outlining possible answers to these questions.

2. **Follow Directions**
   Read all the instructor's directions carefully. Refer back to them periodically, or even highlight them for quick reference. Check to see whether there is a choice of questions to answer, or whether the assignment has multiple parts. This will help you manage your time accordingly.

3. **Reword the Statement or Question**
   Make sure you understand the meaning of the question and rephrase it in your own words. If the prompt is a statement, put it in the form of a question; if it is a question, simplify it, and if possible, divide it into parts. For example, suppose you were asked to support the following statement:
   \textit{Wu rose to power through unscrupulous deception, and she fell through her own vice and weaknesses.}
   Reword the statement as a question, using words such as \textit{why, what, or how}:
   \begin{itemize}
   \item How did Wu rise to power through unscrupulous deception?
   \item How did Wu fall from power through her own vice and weaknesses?
   \end{itemize}

4. **Organize Your Answer (Outline)**
   Take a moment to briefly write down the points you want to include and in what order you want to present these points. Writing points down will help you remember them once you are deep into answering the question.

5. **Answer the Question**
   Answer the question that is asked—not some other question. Do not write a summary of the material, include irrelevant information, or repeat the same idea over and over again. Focus on the question and write with purpose. You may want to begin your answer with a portion (or restatement) of the question. At the very least, state the direction of your essay answer (or the main point or thesis) within the first paragraph.
Remember to demonstrate that you understand the whole picture; make connections between ideas and points you make. Make sure that each answer has a specific focus that your facts, details, examples, and concrete evidence relate to. Back up your specific focus in each essay using notes from lectures and class discussions as well as assigned readings.

6. **Use a Formal Writing Style**

Be respectful, direct, and formal. Do not use slang expressions, or phrases such as *as you know* or *well.* Also avoid empty words and thought. Adjectives such as *good, interesting,* and *nice* say very little. Be direct and descriptive in your writing. State your thesis or main point, supply proof, and use transitional phrases to tie your ideas together.

7. **Be Aware of Appearance**

Write clearly and legibly. Proofread for correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

8. **Notice Key Words**

Look for words that predict what kind of answer you should give. Here are some examples:

**Analyze:** Explain the parts of a concept or idea and explain why your discussion of them is relevant, significant or meaningful.

**Compare** / **Contrast:** Show how two things are alike (compare) or are different (contrast).

**Define:** State the meaning and use examples so the term is understood.

**Describe:** State the characteristics so the image is vivid / **Trace:** Move sequentially from a description of one event to another.

**Discuss:** Define the issue and elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages.

**Evaluate:** Review the positive and negative points about a topic and come to a conclusion about the value of those points.

**Explain:** Show cause and effect and give reasons / **Illustrate:** Provide examples.

**Interpret:** Explain your own understanding of and opinions on a topic.

**Justify:** Explain why a concept is correct or true / **Prove:** Use facts to support an opinion.

**Summarize:** Retell the main points / **Review:** Retell the main points and comment on them.

Adapted from “Test Taking Strategies” and

How to Write Thesis Statements, Introductions, and Conclusions

Brought to you by the PCCC Writing Center (2013)

Introductions

- The introductory paragraph must introduce the topic to your reader. Try to engage the interest of your reader while staying focused on your assignment/topic.
- Give some background information and context. Explain the situation to the reader so that they can make sense of the topic and the questions you will ask. Discuss why the main idea is important—Why should the reader care and keep reading?
- Your introduction and thesis statement should serve as a preview for the rest of your essay. Anything mentioned in this paragraph should be developed and further explained in your body paragraphs.

Thesis Statements

- Your introduction must include a thesis statement (usually at the end of the introductory paragraph). The thesis is the main point you are making about the topic (the reason you are writing the paper). The thesis should state your topic and the point you are making about the topic. It will often include three supporting points (reasons, causes, effects, solutions, examples) for the main idea.
- The thesis should answer the essay question. It should be a clear, focused, and appropriate in scope.

Conclusions

- The concluding paragraph summarizes the major points of your essay. Restate your topic and/or thesis and why it is important. If relevant, address opposing viewpoints and explain why readers should align with your position. Consider what ideas you want to leave the reader with. Sometimes, it is fitting to include a call for action or an overview of potential solutions.
- Do not introduce new ideas and topics that have not been previously mentioned anywhere else in your essay. Stick with a simple clear message that reiterates the main points you have already discussed in your preceding paragraphs.

Adapted from: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/
Evaluating Thesis Statements

What is wrong with each of the thesis statements below? Can you rewrite them so they are clear, focused, and appropriate in scope?

**Prompt:** What is the key to being a successful single-parent?

**Thesis:** There are now more single-parent households in our country than ever before.

**Revised Thesis:**

**Prompt:** What kinds of people attend exercise class? Classify them in terms of their age and appearance, motivations, and attitudes.

**Thesis:** This essay will discuss the people you meet in exercise class.

**Revised Thesis:**

**Prompt:** Why do Americans abuse alcohol? What can be done to prevent it?

**Thesis:** Consumption of wine, beer, and hard liquor increases in the US ever year.

**Revised Thesis:**

**Prompt:** Describe an experience that has dramatically affected your lifestyle.

**Thesis:** Modern life makes people suspicious and unfriendly.

**Revised Thesis:**
Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement Error

A pronoun always has a specific reference point, or antecedent. Therefore, it makes sense that the pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number (singular or plural). Let’s take a look at these sentences:

-“Each college has its own standard of academic success.”
  -The pronoun “its” agrees with its antecedent “college” in number because they are both singular.

-“Sadly, most young Americans seem to value entertainment more than education; they would rather watch reality television than learn something useful.”
  -The pronoun “they” agrees with its antecedent “Americans” in number because they are both plural.

-“A student’s success ultimately depends on him or her.”
  -The singular compound pronoun “him or her” agrees with its singular antecedent “student.” Since the antecedent “student” can mean either a male or female student, the more appropriate pronoun would be “him or her” and not “him” or “her.”

If the pronoun does not agree with its antecedent in number, then the resulting error is a Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement Error. Check out these sentences and see if whether or not the pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number:

-“Every student has their own learning speed.”
  -Does the plural possessive pronoun “their” agree with the singular antecedent “student?” (NOTE: Do not let the adjective “own” fool you. Whether the term “every” means each or all depends on how it is used. In this case, “every” means each, not all.)
  -Since the pronoun does not agree with its antecedent in number, then we should make the appropriate change: Every student has his or her own learning speed.

-“In this shabby hotel, one out of every three rooms has their share of roaches and mice.”
  -Does the prepositional phrases “in this shabby hotel” or “of every three rooms” distract you; the real subject of this sentence is “one,” as in “one out of every three rooms.” In this sentence, the pronoun “their” refers to the subject of the sentence. (What has roaches and mice? One out of every three rooms.) The subject of the sentence is the pronoun’s antecedent. Does the plural pronoun “their” refer to the singular antecedent “one”? Of course not. So make the appropriate changes:
    -“In this shabby hotel, one out of every three rooms has its share of roaches and mice.”

-“The professor and writer had their eighth cup of coffee today.”
-If the subject in this sentence involves two separate individuals, then wouldn’t it make much more sense to write “the professor and the writer” instead of “the professor and writer?” That’s because **compound antecedents** like “the professor and the writer” actually refer to two people and are therefore **plural in number**, while **compound antecedents** like “The professor and writer” refer to the same person and are therefore **singular in number**. So the plural possessive pronoun “their” does not agree in number with the singular antecedent “the professor and writer.” As a result, the sentence should be rewritten in this way:

-“The professor and writer had *his* cup of coffee today.”

  Or, if the specific professor and writer is male, then:

  -“The professor and writer had *her* cup of coffee today.”

-“The English class took its midterm exam today.”

  -Even though the collective noun “class” stands for a **single unit** of students, each student of the English class took his or her exam **individually**; the English class did not take the midterm exam as a **single unit**. The sentence “The English class took its midterm exam today” has the exact same meaning as the sentence “The students of the English class took its midterm exam today.” Does the singular pronoun “it” agree in number with the plural subject “students”? Absolutely not. So make the appropriate changes:

  -“The English class took *their* midterm exam today.”

-“The Puerto Rican student club conducted their annual Meringue and Mafongo Fest over the weekend.”

  -In this sentence, the collective noun club stands as a **single unit**, so is the plural pronoun “their” appropriate to use here? Let’s reverse this sentence so that the pronoun agrees with the antecedent in number:

  -“The Puerto Rican student club conducted *its* annual Meringue and Mafongo Fest over the weekend.”

Remember—If the antecedent is singular or if the antecedent acts as a singular subject, then the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, or if the antecedent acts as a plural subject, then the pronoun must be plural.
Pronoun Reference Error

As we all may already know, a pronoun (like I, you, he, she, it, we, they, his, mine, yours, who, whom, that, which) refers to a noun or another pronoun. The grammatical term for the word a pronoun refers to is antecedent. Every pronoun has a specific and clear antecedent, or, in other words, every pronoun has a specific and clear reference point. Let’s take a look at a few pronouns in action:

-“As she anguish over the novel, Pilar realized that she wouldn’t be able to finish it on time.”
  -The pronouns “her” and she have a specific and clear antecedent—“Pilar.”
  -The pronoun “it” has a specific and clear antecedent—“novel.”

-“With their eyes glazed over in a drowsy stupor, the students struggled to focus on the English professor’s tedious lecture.”
  -The pronoun “their” has a specific and clear antecedent—“students.”

-“Xavier, who had a habit of writing melodramatic essays, continually frustrated his English professor Nelson, who had the misfortune of reading them.”
  -The 1st pronoun “who” has a specific and clear antecedent—“Xavier.”
  *NOTE: pronouns are usually placed as close as possible to its antecedent.
  -The 2nd pronoun “who” has a specific and clear antecedent—“Nelson.”
  -The 3rd pronoun “them” has a specific and clear antecedent—“essays.”
  *NOTE: If the pronoun is plural, its antecedent must also be plural. Even though the pronoun “them” is placed far away from its antecedent, it’s clear that “them” refers to “essays” because they both agree in number.

It is fairly easy to figure out which pronouns refer to which antecedent, especially if the pronoun is placed as close as possible to its specific antecedent. Sometimes, however, a pronoun is not placed as close as possible to its specific antecedent. Other times, a pronoun lacks a specific antecedent. In both of these cases, the pronoun reference is unclear, resulting into a Pronoun Reference Error. Let’s take a look at these sentences:

-“Pilar told her literary agent that she needed a break.”
  -Whereas the 1st pronoun “her” has a clear and specific antecedent (“Pilar”), the 2nd pronoun “she” does not have a clear and specific antecedent.
  *(Who needed a break? Pilar or her literary agent?)*

-“As he saw his student sleeping on his desk, the English professor stopped his lecture to tell him that he should pay attention and learn something for a change.”
  -Some of the pronouns in this sentence may seem to have a clear and specific antecedent, but the antecedents for the underlined pronouns (“his” and “he”) are unclear.
  *(Whose desk? The student’s desk or the professor’s desk?)*
SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Subjects and verbs must agree in number, which means that a singular subject requires a singular verb whereas a plural subject requires a plural verb. Study the following examples which illustrate this principle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am here. (singular)</th>
<th>You are here. (sing/pl)</th>
<th>He is here. (singular)</th>
<th>We are here. (plural)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do yoga. (singular)</td>
<td>You do yoga. (sing/pl)</td>
<td>She does yoga. (singular)</td>
<td>We do yoga. (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have pets. (singular)</td>
<td>You have pets. (sing/pl)</td>
<td>Joe has pets. (singular)</td>
<td>We have pets. (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I play piano. (singular)</td>
<td>You play piano. (sing/pl)</td>
<td>One plays piano. (singular)</td>
<td>We play piano. (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was first. (singular)</td>
<td>You were first. (sing/pl)</td>
<td>It was first. (singular)</td>
<td>We were first. (plural)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The third person singular form (he, she, Joe, one, it above) in the present tense is the only verb form that requires an "s" ending (The past tense "was" is an exception to this rule.)

The following rules/suggestions should help you determine correct subject-verb agreement.

1. Connecting subjects with "and" usually makes them plural; therefore, to check for proper agreement you can substitute the pronouns "they" or "we" for plural subjects. (Exceptions include pairs of words that are considered to be one thing. Peanut butter and jelly is my favorite sandwich.) For example:

   Mary and Jack are friends.  
   (They are friends)          

   The car and the truck run well.  
   (They run well.)                

   He and I are friends.  
   (We are friends.)                

2. Connecting subjects with "or" or "nor" can require either a singular verb or plural verb; use the subject closer to the verb to decide which form is correct. For example:

   Neither she nor I am going    
   Neither Jack nor Mary is going
   Either Jane, Maria, Anne, Cassandra, or Ann has the tickets.

3. Prepositional phrases never contain the subject of the sentence. In most cases, you should ignore the prepositional phrase when trying to determine the correct verb form to use. For example:

   One of the flowers is dying
   Neither of those boys has graduated.
   Both of the books were on sale.

   The coach, along with the players, is celebrating.
   Either of those dresses looks fine.
   Every one of the glasses is broken.

4. Singular indefinite pronouns require singular verbs. Examples of singular indefinite pronouns include the following: one, anyone, everyone, someone, nobody, anybody, everybody, somebody, nothing, anything, everything, something, each, either, neither.

   Everyone is happy. Each of the sacks was full. Nobody was leaving. That one costs too much.

5. A few indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural, depending upon their use in the sentence. Often information in a prepositional phrase can help you decide whether the pronoun is singular or plural. These "two-way" pronouns are as follows: all, some, any, none, most, more, enough.

   All of the pie was eaten.  
   Most of the roof is finished.  
   None of the snow has melted.

   All of the pears were eaten.  
   Most of the trees are dying.  
   None of the boys have passed.
6. The words "here" and "there" are not used as subjects. When they start a sentence, you must look elsewhere for the subject. Also, you must be careful to find the correct subject when dealing with questions because the subject will often not be the first word of the question. Study the following (subjects are underlined):

   There go my two best friends.  Where has she gone?  Here is your math book.
   Why are you doing this?  What are their names?  There seem to be problems.

7. Some nouns that end in "s" are singular in meaning and require a singular verb. Other nouns that end in "s" are singular in meaning but require a plural verb. Consider these examples:

   Mathematics is easy.  Measles is a contagious disease.  Physics is complicated.
   The scissors are sharp.  My pants need to be washed.  Those shorts are torn.

8. Collective nouns such as "class" or "team" may be singular or plural depending upon how they are used: emphasis on the group takes a singular verb; emphasis on members acting individually requires a plural verb.

   The class was dismissed.  The class are presenting their reports this week.
   (The whole group as one.)  (The class members individually will give the reports.)

9. In an adjective clause, the verb agrees with the antecedent of the relative pronoun (who, which, that), which is usually the nearest noun. When "only one" is emphasized among a larger number, always use "one" as the singular antecedent. Consider the following examples (the antecedents are underlined):

   I like a dog that is friendly.  I like dogs that are friendly.  One of the dogs that are sick is mine.
   Only one of the girls who is coming is single.  That is the only one of the dogs that is still sick.

10. Weights, measures, time, and money can be either singular or plural. If they are thought of as whole quantities, they are singular; if they are countable, separate units, then they are considered plural.

    Fifty feet of hose is enough.  (singular)  Ten one-dollar bills are on the table.  (plural)

1. Joe and Jim (have, has) been friends for a long time.  They (is, are) neighbors and (play, plays) in a band.
2. Neither Jan nor I (were, was) able to attend the meeting.  We (were, was) sorry we had to miss it.
3. Each of the barrels (is, are) full.  Each one (need, needs) to be inspected.  They (is, are) from Italy.
4. There (has, have) been two tornadoes near here this year.  They (frighten, frightens) me.
5. The stories in this book (doesn't, don't) interest me, but my wife and son (enjoy, enjoys) them.
6. The nurse or the secretary (come, comes) in on Saturday.  Much work (needs, need) to be done.
7. One of those sentences (don't, doesn't) make sense to me, but my classmates (weren't, wasn't) confused by it.
8. None of the tests (has, have) been graded, but all of the homework (has, have) been checked.
9. Anyone who (want, wants) to try out (need, needs) to make an appointment.
10. The doctor and her husband (take, takes) a trip to Mexico each year.
11. This class, together with math and biology, (keep, keeps) me extremely busy.
12. Here (come, comes) the meanest kids on the block.  Why (do, does) they act so bad?
13. Every one of the shoes (seems, seem) to need a shine.  Neither of us (was, were) ready to do it though.
14. Jason, Timothy, Sandra, or I (am, are) responsible for closing the store on the weekend.
15. Forty dollars (seem, seems) too high a price.  There (has, have) to be better bargains somewhere in town.
Inconsistent Verb Tense

An Inconsistent Verb Tense error is quite simple to both identify and correct. Look over the following sentences:

"As soon as I get out of bed, I did fifty pushups."  
"We were seven miles from the shore. Suddenly, the sky turned dark."  
"The man behind me was sipping soda and crunching away. I am getting angrier by the minute."

Notice how, in all these sentences, the verb tense changes from one verb to the other (e.g. present tense to past tense, past tense to present tense).

The solution's easy—if you're writing about something in the past, keep your verbs in the past tense. If present, keep it present. If future, go future, etc.  
In whatever verb tense you're writing, you must keep it consistent.

Therefore, NO INCONSISTENT VERB TENSE—no time-traveling by jumping from present tense to past tense and so on and so forth.

So, for instance, if you were writing the 1st sample sentence from a retrospective perspective (say that phrase 5 times, just to see if you don't get tongue-tied), then you would simply change the verb tense to reflect a time that's past:

"As soon as I got out of bed, I did fifty pushups."

The Inconsistent Verb Tense Error seems like such an obvious error that it might not be worth mentioning, but you'll be surprised--I've had a number of students in the recent past, most of whom were from Writing Skills II, who were guilty of committing this very same error. It might even show up in your own rough draft writing.
The Apostrophe

The apostrophe has three uses:

1. To form possessives of nouns
2. To show the omission of letters
3. To indicate certain plurals of lowercase letters

Forming Possessives of Nouns

To see if you need to make a possessive, turn the phrase around and make it an "of the..." phrase. For example:

the boy's hat = the hat of the boy
three days' journey = journey of three days

If the noun after "of" is a building, an object, or a piece of furniture, then **no apostrophe is needed!**

room of the hotel = hotel room
door of the car = car door
leg of the table = table leg

Once you've determined whether you need to make a possessive, follow these rules to create one.

- **add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):**

  the owner's car
  James's hat (James' hat is also acceptable. For plural, proper nouns that are possessive, use an apostrophe after the 's': "The Eggleses' presentation was good." The Eggleses are a husband and wife consultant team.)

- **add 's to the plural forms that do not end in -s:**

  the children's game
  the geese's honking

- **add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:**

  two cats' toys
  three friends' letters
  the countries' laws

- **add 's to the end of compound words:**

  my brother-in-law's money

- **add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:**

  Todd and Anne's apartment

Showing omission of letters

Apostrophes are used in contractions. A contraction is a word (or set of numbers) in which one or more letters (or numbers) have been omitted. The apostrophe shows this omission. Contractions are common in speaking and in informal writing. To use an apostrophe to create a contraction, place an apostrophe where the omitted letter(s) would go. Here are some examples:

don't = do not
I'm = I am
he'll = he will
who's = who is
shouldn't = should not
didn't = did not
could've = could have (NOT "could of")
'60 = 1960

Forming plurals of lowercase letters

Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters that appear in lowercase; here the rule appears to be more typographical than grammatical, e.g. "three ps" versus "three p's." To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place 's after the letter. There is no need for apostrophes indicating a plural on capitalized letters, numbers, and symbols (though keep in mind that some editors, teachers, and professors still prefer them). Here are some examples:

p's and q's = minding your p's and q's is a phrase believed to be taken from the early days of the printing press when letters were set in presses backwards so they would appear on the printed page correctly. Although the origins of this phrase are disputed, the expression was used commonly to mean, "Be careful, don't make a mistake." Today, the term also indicates maintaining politeness, possibly from "mind your pleases and thank-yous."

Nita's mother constantly stressed minding one's p's and q's.

three Macintosh G4s = three of the Macintosh model G4

There are three G4s currently used in the writing classroom.

many &s = many ampersands

That printed page has too many &s on it.

the 1960s = the years in decade from 1960 to 1969

The 1960s were a time of great social unrest.
The '60s were a time of great social unrest.

Don't use apostrophes for personal pronouns, the relative pronoun who, or for noun plurals.

Apostrophes should not be used with possessive pronouns because possessive pronouns already show possession—they don't need an apostrophe. His, her, its, my, yours, ours are all possessive pronouns. However, indefinite pronouns, such as one, anyone, other, no one, and anybody, can be made possessive. Here are some examples:

INCORRECT: his' book
CORRECT: his book
CORRECT: one's book
CORRECT: anybody's book

INCORRECT: Who's dog is this?
CORRECT: Whose dog is this?

INCORRECT: The group made it's decision.
CORRECT: The group made its decision.

(Note: Its and it's are not the same thing. It's is a contraction for "it is" and its is a possessive pronoun meaning "belonging to it." It's raining out = it is raining out. A simple way to remember this rule is the fact that you don't use an apostrophe for the possessive his or hers, so don't do it with its!)

INCORRECT: a friend of yours'
CORRECT: a friend of yours
Comma Splices

Even though a comma is generally used as a punctuation mark that separates, it can never separate sentences on its own. If only a comma is used to separate complete sentences, then the resulting error is a Comma-Splice Error. Take a look at this sentence:

-“Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper; he was committed to his work.”

What comes before the comma is a complete sentence and what comes after the comma is a complete sentence. The lonely comma cannot separate these two sentences on its own. There are several ways to fix a comma splice error like this:

-Separate the sentences into individual sentences by replacing the comma with a period.
  -e.g. “Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper; he was committed to his work.”

-Join the complete sentences into one complete sentence by using a semicolon:
  -e.g. “Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper; he was committed to his work.”
  -NOTE: This method of fixing a comma splice error works best if the complete sentences are closely related to one another.

-Separate the complete sentences by adding a coordinating conjunction after the comma:
  -“Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper, for he was committed to his work.”
  -NOTE: Only use the coordinating conjunction that best fits the relationship between the complete sentences. Not every coordinating conjunction would work. (E.g. “Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper, yet he was committed to his work.”)
- Make one complete sentence a dependent clause and join it with the other complete sentence by using a subordinating conjunction.

  - e.g. "Because he was committed to his work, Nestor worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper."

  NOTE: Only use the subordinating conjunction that best fits the relationship between the complete sentences. Not every subordinating conjunction would work.
  (E.g. "Even though he worked all morning, day, and evening on his paper, Nestor is committed to his work.")
A **Narrative Shift Error** is quite easy to identify and correct. Every paragraph and every essay reflects a *voice*, particularly a *narrative voice*. Here, the term “narrative” stands for the *narrator* of the paragraph or essay. The narrator is simply the *author* of the paragraph or essay. As the narrator of the paragraph or essay, the author must be *consistent* with his or her narrative voice. Perhaps an easier way to think about an author’s narrative voice is to think of it in terms of point-of-view. For a narrative, there are 3 types of point-of-view: 1st person point-of-view (*I, we*), 2nd person point-of-view (*you*), and 3rd person point-of-view (*he, she, it, they*). If the author shifts between different types of point of view, then the resulting error is a **Narrative Shift Error**. Here’s an example:

"Most people don’t seem to care much about reading and writing. Perhaps it is because they feel that reading and writing skills are in some ways impractical. I, however, feel that this common misjudgment of reading and writing skills as impractical is itself impractical. If you can’t read or write well, then how can you expect to succeed in the job market and in the real world?"

Notice how in that small paragraph the narrator shifts from 2nd person point-of-view to 1st person point-of-view to 3rd person point-of-view. The solution to a **Narrative Shift Error** is simple—be as consistent as possible with your point-of-view, whether your point-of-view is 1st person, 2nd person or 3rd person. Now, let’s look over the revised version of the paragraph that’s consistent in narrative voice:

"Most people don’t seem to care much about reading and writing. Perhaps it is because they feel that reading and writing skills are in some ways impractical. This common misjudgment of reading and writing skills as impractical, however, is itself impractical. If a person can’t read or write well, then how can he or she expect to succeed in the job market and in the real world?"

This revised version is consistent in narrative voice—it sticks to the 3rd person point of view.

Remember—*always be consistent with your narrative point of view.*
TRANSITION WORDS

Transition words are used to link sentences and ideas. If you use them correctly, your writing will be easier to understand and more mature. Look for transitions when you are reading the newspaper, a magazine, or a book. Notice how other writers have used these words, then try to use them yourself in your own writing.

Directions: For practice, use the transitions at the right in the sentences at the left. In each group, use a transition only once. Read each sentence carefully so that you can choose an appropriate transition. Capitalize when necessary.

1. I would like to see you tomorrow, ___________ let’s have lunch together.
2. My sister loves to eat, ___________ I don’t care much about food.
3. When you begin an exercise program, you must be careful not to overdo it.
   My father, ___________, hurt his back by exercising too hard without warming up first.
4. She had looked everywhere for a job; ___________ she was called for an interview.
   ___________ for example finally
   ___________ but so still beyond to the left

5. She had been studying for hours. ___________, she hoped to do well on the test.
6. First, Mary went to the store. ___________, she went to visit her mother.
7. I would like to read many books; ___________, I don’t seem to have enough time to read.
8. John ate and ate; ___________, he never gained weight.
9. Joe ate too fast. ___________ he had indigestion.
   ___________ similarly third nevertheless however as a result then for instance therefore

10. He stayed up too late last night; ___________, he slept until noon.
11. I want you to buy milk, eggs, and fruit juice; ___________.
   I want you to be sure to get cereal and ice cream.
12. I was concentrating on my homework. ___________, the soup boiled over.
13. ___________, I will boil the water. Second, I will brew the tea, and ___________, I will serve it.
14. Joe, ___________, happens to be my best friend.
15. Jane studies all the time; ___________, Billy never studies.

Using Transitions
Directions: Create one original sentence or pair of sentences using the transition indicated.

1. for example

2. furthermore

3. nevertheless

4. meanwhile

5. however

6. as a result

7. without a doubt

8. consequently
REVISING CHECKLIST

You should always be looking for ways to improve your paper. Ask the following questions as you revise:

CONTENT & INTRODUCTION
1. Is your title interesting?
2. Is your main idea narrowed enough to be covered in depth?
3. Are your opening lines appealing enough to hook the reader?
4. Will your reader learn something new from your paper?

ORGANIZATION
5. Have you organized your paper in a sensible, logical, or creative way to suit your purpose?
6. Do you have enough support for your main idea?
7. Does all the information relate to your main idea? Have you eliminated unneeded, irrelevant formation?
8. Are effective transitions used to connect your details and examples to help your reader follow your points easily?
9. Does the conclusion provide a satisfying sense of closure? Does it provide the proper emphasis?

STYLE
10. Are precise words used instead of vague ones?
11. Is concrete (sensory) language used when appropriate?
12. Would similes and metaphors make an explanation clearer or a detail more vivid?
13. Are a variety of sentence structures and length used?
14. Have you checked for unnecessary repetition (especially linking verbs and pronouns)? Have you cleared out the clutter?

MECHANICS
15. Have you checked end punctuation ( . ? !)?
16. Do you have reasons for using the commas you have inserted?
17. Have you checked for semi-colons or commas with conjunctions between related sentences
18. Have you used dashes, colons, and quotation marks correctly?
19. Have you checked spelling and word usage, especially sound-alikes, verb tenses, and pronouns?

OVERVIEW
20. Are you satisfied with your paper? Have you created the impression you wanted to make for the reader?
All good writers revise. They read over what they have written looking for ways to improve by combining sentences, removing or adding words, changing words, and rearranging sentences or paragraphs. To revise means "to look at again, to see again...to correct or improve." When you revise, you are trying to make your writing as clear, smooth, and interesting as you can. This can mean shortening, lengthening, changing or substituting, rearranging. Look at and think about the following examples:

Original: I am thinking about my home town. I left my home town five years ago.
Revision: I am thinking about my home town, which I left five years ago.

Original: People who are reasonable sometimes have ideas that don't work.
Revision: Reasonable people sometimes have ideas that don't work.

Original: The cat that has brown and white stripes jumped into my lap which was empty.
Revision: The brown and white striped cat jumped into my empty lap.

Original: The city has many problems. One problem is bad transportation. It's terrible. Another problem is sanitation...
Revision 1: The city has many problems. One problem is the subways. The trains are dirty and unpleasant. The floors are filthy. Another problem is sanitation...
Revision 2: The city has many problems. One problem is the subways, which are dirty and unpleasant. Yesterday, on the Flushing local, cigarette butts and crumpled pages of The Daily News lay everywhere. Streaks of black and yellow paint covered the windows. On the only empty seat in the car sat a paper bag wet from cola that dripped to a brown puddle on the floor. Candy and gum wrappers were scattered under the seats, too. I almost felt as if I were riding in a garbage can.

Here are two paragraphs about similar subjects--fathers. Which paragraph is more in need of revision? Why?

My father's face is rough, leathery and wrinkled. Large pores in the skin cover his nose and cheeks. His nose, broken twice in his life, makes him look like a boxer who has lost too many fights. His mouth, unless he smiles, looks hard and threatening. Dad's chin is massive and angular. Shaved or not, my father's face is rugged.

I want to talk about my father. He is strict with his children, especially me. He won't let me out of the house unless I've done all my homework. He is a tall and rather skinny man. Some people say he is good-looking. He has a nice streak of gray in his hair. He laughs a lot and enjoys life. My father is interesting.
8 Proofreading Tips And Techniques

Whether you are writing a magazine article, a college essay or an email to a client, getting your text free of mistakes is essential. The spell checker helps, but it is far from foolproof. That is where proofreading comes in. Below you will find 8 tips and techniques to make your proofreading sessions more effective.

1. Concentration is Key

If you’re going to spot mistakes, then you need to concentrate. That means getting rid of distractions and potential interruptions. Switch off the cell phone, turn off the television or radio and stay away from the email.

2. Put It On Paper

People read differently on screen and on paper, so print out a copy of your writing. If you read aloud, your ear might catch errors that your eye may have missed.

3. Watch Out for Homonyms

Homonyms are words that share the same spelling or pronunciation, but have different meanings. Switching accept with except or complement with compliment could be disastrous, so pay attention to them.

4. Watch Out for Contractions and Apostrophes

People often mix their and they’re, its and it’s, your and you’re and so on. If there is something that can hurt the credibility of your text, it is a similar mistake. Also, remember that the apostrophe is never used to form plurals.

5. Check the Punctuation

Focusing on the words is good, but do not neglect the punctuation. Pay attention to capitalized words, missing or extra commas, periods used incorrectly and so on.

6. Read it Backwards

When writing we usually become blind to our own mistakes since the brain automatically “corrects” wrong words inside sentences. In order to break this pattern you can read the text backwards, word by word.

7. Check the Numbers

Stating that the value of an acquisition was $10,000 instead of $100,000 is definitely not the same thing. What about the population of China, is it 1,2 million or 1,2 billion? Make sure your numbers are correct.

8. Get Someone Else to Proofread It

After checking all the previous points, do not forget to get a friend to proofread it for you. You will be amazed at the mistakes you’ve missed. A second person will also be in a better position to evaluate whether the sentences make sense or not.

Proofreading Your Writing

This resource was written by Purdue OWL.
Last full revision by Jaclyn M. Wells, Morgan Sousa, and Mia Martini.
Last edited by Allen Brizee on May 5th 2009 at 9:44AM

Summary: Proofreading is primarily about searching your writing for errors, both grammatical and typographical, before submitting your paper for an audience (a teacher, a publisher, etc.). Use this resource to help you find and fix common errors.

Where do I begin?

Though everyone has a unique proofreading process, there are some general strategies that can be helpful to most writers. Begin improving your proofreading skills by trying out the guidelines listed below.

General Strategies

- Take a break! Allow yourself some time between writing and proofing. Even a five-minute break is productive because it will help you get some distance from what you have written. The goal is to return with a fresh eye and mind.
- Leave yourself enough time. Since many errors are made and overlooked by speeding through writing and proofreading, taking the time to carefully look over your writing will help you to catch errors you might otherwise miss. Always read through your writing slowly. If you read at a normal speed, you won't give your eyes sufficient time to spot errors.
- Read aloud. Reading a paper aloud encourages you to read every little word.
- Role-play. While reading, put yourself in your audience's shoes. Playing the role of the reader encourages you to see the paper as your audience might.
- Get others involved. Asking a friend or a Writing Lab tutor to read your paper will let you get another perspective on your writing and a fresh reader will be
able to help you catch mistakes that you might have overlooked.

**Personalizing Proofreading**

In addition to following the general guidelines above, individualizing your proofreading process to your needs will help you proofread more efficiently and effectively. You won't be able to check for everything (and you don't have to), so you should find out what your typical problem areas are and look for each type of error individually. Here's how:

- Find out what errors you typically make. Review instructors' comments about your writing and/or review your paper with a Writing Lab tutor.
- Learn how to fix those errors. Talk with your instructor and/or with a Writing Lab tutor. The instructor and the tutor can help you understand why you make the errors you do so that you can learn to avoid them.
- Use specific strategies. Use the strategies detailed on the following pages to find and correct your particular errors in usage, sentence structure, and spelling and punctuation.

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Exercises for Eliminating Wordiness

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab at http://owl.english.purdue.edu

For strategies to improve conciseness in your writing, see Methods of Eliminating Wordiness at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_concise.html

**Directions:** Revise these sentences to state their meaning in fewer words. Avoid passive voice, needless repetition, and wordy phrases and clauses. The first sentence has been done as an example. When you're done, you can check your answers at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/gl_conciseA1.html.

1. There are many farmers in the area who are planning to attend the meeting which is scheduled for next Friday.

   1. *Many area farmers plan to attend next Friday's meeting.*

2. Although Bradley Hall is regularly populated by students, close study of the building as a structure is seldom undertaken by them.

3. He dropped out of school on account of the fact that it was necessary for him to help support his family.

4. It is expected that the new schedule will be announced by the bus company within the next few days.

5. There are many ways in which a student who is interested in meeting foreign students may come to know one.

6. It is very unusual to find someone who has never told a deliberate lie on purpose.

7. Trouble is caused when people disobey rules that have been established for the safety of all.

8. A campus rally was attended by more than a thousand students. Five students were arrested by campus police for disorderly conduct, while several others are charged by campus administrators with organizing a public meeting without being issued a permit to do so.
9. The subjects that are considered most important by students are those that have been shown to be useful to them after graduation.

10. In the not too distant future, college freshmen must all become aware of the fact that there is a need for them to make contact with an academic adviser concerning the matter of a major.

11. In our company there are wide-open opportunities for professional growth with a company that enjoys an enviable record for stability in the dynamic atmosphere of aerospace technology.

12. Some people believe in capital punishment, while other people are against it; there are many opinions on this subject.

**Directions:** Combine each sentence group into one concise sentence.

1. The cliff dropped to reefs seventy-five feet below. The reefs below the steep cliff were barely visible through the fog.

2. Their car is gassed up. It is ready for the long drive. The drive will take all night.

3. Sometimes Stan went running with Blanche. She was a good athlete. She was on the track team at school.

4. Taylor brought some candy back from Europe. It wasn't shaped like American candy. The candy tasted kind of strange to him.

5. Government leaders like to mention the creation of new jobs. They claim that these new jobs indicate a strong economy. They don't mention that low-wage jobs without benefits and security have replaced many good jobs.

**Directions:** Revise the following passage, avoiding wordiness and undesirable repetition.

A large number of people enjoy reading murder mysteries regularly. As a rule, these people are not themselves murderers, nor would these people really ever enjoy seeing someone commit an actual murder, nor would most of them actually enjoy trying to solve an actual murder. They probably enjoy
reading murder mysteries because of this reason: they have found a way to escape from the monotonous, boring routine of dull everyday existence.

To such people the murder mystery is realistic fantasy. It is realistic because the people in the murder mystery are as a general rule believable as people. They are not just made up pasteboard figures. It is also realistic because the character who is the hero, the character who solves the murder mystery, solves it not usually by trial and error and haphazard methods but by exercising a high degree of logic and reason. It is absolutely and totally essential that people who enjoy murder mysteries have an admiration for the human faculty of logic.

But murder mysteries are also fantasies. The people who read such books of fiction play a game. It is a game in which they suspend certain human emotions. One of these human emotions that they suspend is pity. If the reader stops to feel pity and sympathy for each and every victim that is killed or if the reader stops to feel terrible horror that such a thing could happen in our world of today, that person will never enjoy reading murder mysteries. The devoted reader of murder mysteries keeps uppermost in mind at all times the goal of arriving through logic and observation at the final solution to the mystery offered in the book. It is a game with life and death. Whodunits hopefully help the reader to hide from the hideous horrors of actual life and death in the real world.
Parallel Structure

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "or."

Words and Phrases

With the -ing form (gerund) of words:

Not Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and to ride a bicycle.
Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and riding a bicycle.

With infinitive phrases:

Not Parallel: Mary likes to hike, swim, and riding a bicycle.
Parallel: Mary likes to hike, to swim, and to ride a bicycle OR
Mary likes to hike, swim, and ride a bicycle.

Other Examples:

Not Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and in a detailed manner.
Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and thoroughly.

Not Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and his motivation was low.
Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he waited until the last minute to study for the exam, completed his lab problems in a careless manner, and lacked motivation.

Clauses

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism.

Example 1

Not Parallel: The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and to do some warm-up exercises before the game.
Parallel: The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, not eat too much, and do some warm-up exercises before the game.
Lists After a Colon

Example 1

Not Parallel: The dictionary can be used to find these: word meanings, pronunciations, correct spellings, and looking up irregular verbs.

Parallel: The dictionary can be used to find these: word meanings, pronunciations, correct spellings, and irregular verbs.

An article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must either be used only before the first term or else be repeated before each term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faulty Parallelism</th>
<th>Corrected Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The French, the Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese</td>
<td>The French, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In spring, summer, or in winter</td>
<td>In spring, summer, or winter (In spring, in summer, or in winter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction. Many violations of this rule can be corrected by rearranging the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faulty Parallelism</th>
<th>Corrected Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.</td>
<td>The ceremony was both long and tedious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A time not for words, but action</td>
<td>A time not for words, but for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will.</td>
<td>You must either grant his request or incur his ill will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, that it is unconstitutional.</td>
<td>My objections are, first, that the measure is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When making comparisons, the things you compare should be couched in parallel structures whenever that is possible and appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faulty Parallelism</th>
<th>Corrected Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My income is smaller than my wife.</td>
<td>My income is smaller than my wife's.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Run-On Sentences

Run-On Sentences are exactly how they sound—they are complete sentences that run into each other because of a lack of punctuation. For example:

-Neil is too nice of a guy people tend to take advantage of him.

Here, we have one complete sentence—"Neil is too nice of a guy"—and another complete sentence—"people tend to take advantage of him"—running into each other. There are several ways to correct a sentence like this:

-Separate the complete sentences into individual sentences.
  -e.g. "Neil is too nice of a guy. People tend to take advantage of him."

-Join the complete sentences into one complete sentence by using a semicolon.
  -e.g. "Neil is too nice of a guy; people tend to take advantage of him."
  -NOTE: This method only works well when the complete sentences are closely related to each other.

-Join the complete sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
  -e.g. "Neil is too nice of a guy, so people tend to take advantage of him."
  -NOTE: Only use the coordinating conjunction that best fits the relationship between the complete sentences. Not every coordinating conjunction would work (E.g. "Neil is too nice of a guy, but people tend to take advantage of him.")

-Make one complete sentence dependent on the other complete sentence by using a subordinating conjunction.
  -e.g. "Because Neil is too nice of a guy, people tend to take advantage of him."
  -NOTE: Only use the subordinating conjunction that best fits the relationship between the complete sentences. Not every subordinating conjunction would work. (E.g. "Although Neil is too nice of a guy, people tend to take advantage of him.")
Run-on Sentence Practice

Correct the following run-on sentences by dividing them into two complete sentences. Add a period to the end of the first sentence, and capitalize the first letter in the second sentence.

She wanted to go to the movie she called to find out what time the show started. Corrected: She wanted to go to the movie. She called to find out what time the show started.

1. The red car is in the parking lot I don't know where the van and the motorcycle are.
2. She was the best student in the class all the study groups invited her to participate.
3. She found the house once she didn't think she could find it again.
4. There are four possible routes I don't know which is the best.
5. He wanted to meet the group at the restaurant he called to find out what time to arrive.
6. There weren't enough copies to go around we had to share the copies that were available.
7. You finished your work early you don't have to stay.
8. She didn't want to miss her meeting she made sure she left early.
9. They were in a desperate situation they didn't know what to do.
10. The children wanted to go fishing they gathered the supplies they needed.
11. She wanted to leave right after the ceremony too many people were around.
12. She sang as loudly as she could everybody heard her.
13. There was complete silence around me I still couldn't fall asleep.
Sentence Fragments

A Sentence Fragment is quite simply an incomplete sentence. There are several types of sentence fragments to watch out for:

-Fragments without a Subject

- e.g. "Mona worked diligently on her research paper. And skipped meals as a result."
- There is no subject in the sentence fragment "And skipped meals as a result."
- Correcting fragments without a subject is easy — either connect the fragment to the previous sentence or add a subject to the fragment.

- e.g. "Mona worked diligently on her research paper and skipped meals as a result."
- e.g. "Mona worked diligently on her research paper. She skipped meals as a result."
- e.g. "Mona worked diligently on her research and she skipped meals as a result."

-Fragments without complete Verbs

- e.g. "Octavio was obsessed with photography. Bringing a camera everywhere he went."
- If we were to include a subject in the fragment, we would still have a fragment without a complete verb: "He bringing a camera everywhere he went." There are several ways to fix this type of fragment:
  - Add a subject and change the verb to a complete verb:
    - "Octavio was obsessed with photography. He brought a camera everywhere he went."
  - Change the fragment into an -ing phrase that modifies the complete sentence:
    - "Bringing a camera everywhere he went, Octavio was obsessed with photography."
    - "or-
    - "Octavio was obsessed with photography, bringing a camera everywhere he went."
- Dependent Clause Fragments

- There are 2 types of Dependent Clause Fragments:
  - Subordinating Clause Fragments
  - Relative Clause Fragments

- Subordinating Clause Fragments

  - e.g. "Although the writer considered himself a master of language."
    - The dependent clause fragments are subordinating clause fragment
      because it begins with a subordinating conjunction—"although." There
      are two ways to correct a subordinating clause fragment:
      1. Remove the subordinating conjunction to make the
         dependent clause an independent clause:
         "The writer considered himself a master of language."
      2. Join the subordinating clause fragment to an independent
         clause in order to make a complete sentence:
         "Although the writer considered himself a master of
         language, he tended to make sentence fragment errors in his work."

- Relative Clause Fragments

  - e.g. "My girlfriend's father greeted me not with a handshake but with a fist-
    pump. Which is an odd greeting coming from sixty-three year old man."

    - The relative clause fragment "Which is an odd greeting coming from a sixty-
      three year old man" is a dependent clause that begins with a relative
      pronoun ("which") but it cannot stand alone as a sentence. Therefore, it
      should be joined with an independent clause.

    - e.g. "My girlfriend's father greeted me not with a handshake but with a fist-
      pump, which is an odd greeting coming from a sixty-three year old man."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Writing Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My professor says I need 2 books and 2 articles for my paper. How do I find those?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I just received my paper topic, and I don't know where to start! How do I find information?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I've researched my topic and started writing, but I'm not sure if it's any good! Help!</td>
<td></td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My professor says my papers need to be more organized.</td>
<td></td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think my paper topic is too broad (or too narrow) and I'm not finding good information.</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I could improve my writing skills. How do I do that?</td>
<td></td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to create a bibliography. How do I do that?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I'm taking a writing intensive course and need help with revising my paper.</td>
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<td>☑️</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do I know if this website is OK to use in my paper?</td>
<td></td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't understand how to use other sources in my own writing and not plagiarize. Help!</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to prepare for the College Writing Exam (CWE). Where do I start?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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<tr>
<td>I'm not sure what the differences are between MLA and APA formats. Who can I ask?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can't access my etutoring account. Who can I ask for help?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm having trouble uploading files to my efolio account. I also have general questions about efolio. Who do I ask?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need a quiet place to study. Where can I go?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a college-level student seeking writing help. Where do I go and who can I ask?</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Academic Language & Why Do We Use It?

Academic language is a mixture of a writing style as well as knowledge of specific vocabulary. Using academic language properly helps to convey arguments in an authoritative tone. It facilitates presentation of ideas and makes any paper sound trustworthy.

How to Write in Academic Language

Objective Tone

In academic language, first and second person perspective is not allowed. Writers should write exclusively in the third person. Moreover, all vocabulary comprised in an academic paper should be objective which means that subjective elements like “I believe” or emotive contents like “a great book” are highly unwelcome. All judgments and conclusions result from reasoning and not individual beliefs.

Formal Language

Academic language promotes a simple and somewhat modest way of writing. Essays should be formal and understandable, and use Standard English structure. Creative elements such as ellipses, exclamations or rhetorical questions are unacceptable. Writers should also avoid passive voice as well as all unnecessary abbreviations.

Balanced Essay Structure

The weight of referenced material shouldn’t outdo author’s own points and arguments. Paragraphs should be of more or less the same length. Generally, the whole paper should be written in the same academic style which is specific and coherent.

Scientific Approach to Writing

In academic language, elaborate descriptions are unnecessary. This means that technical vocabulary should be used instead of descriptive language. Use words that relate to the subject. Avoid big words that sound impressive, particularly if you are uncertain what they mean.

Proper use of academic language is no less important than professional research or following the guidelines of a specific essay type and citation style. It allows writers to sound convincing, unbiased and take their point across.

Source for Material: http://academicwriting.suite101.com/article.cfm/what_is_academic_language
Other Considerations

Style – What kind of writing are we doing?

- Narration and Description
- Classification/Division
- Process/Analysis
- Compare/Contrast
- Cause/Effect
- Argument/Persuasion

Organization

- Introduction & Thesis – (Topic vs. Thesis)
- How do you form well developed paragraphs?
  - Include a Topic sentence
  - Develop Supporting Details
  - Create a Concluding sentence
  - Focus on one main idea, which holds together and leads you to the next on
  - Repeat key words
  - Arrange ideas in logical order
  - Use consistent pronouns
  - Use transition words to connect ideas (additional ideas, contrasting ideas, restatement, ordering, examples)

- Conclusion (make the connection – state the obvious)

Evidence / Support

- Quotations
- Plagiarism
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Relevance

Paraphrasing examples

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/

http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/example1paraphrasing.html

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/qwrtcotr/resources/handouts/parasum.html

http://www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/manual/paraphrase.htm
Sample Question

Computers are rapidly becoming a tool in education for even the youngest of children. Do you believe that computers have a value in education, or are they causing more harm than good?
Read through the sample academic essay assignment thoroughly. Use the sample assignment to complete the areas in the chart below.

ASSIGNMENT: For this assignment you are required to write a research paper on a selected topic that utilizes outside sources in support of your argument.

For this paper, you will examine stories by two authors that share a common theme. The authors and the theme that you select are your choice. Some broad themes that you might consider are: Beauty, Marriage, Love, or Power. (These are only suggestions. Please feel free to consider other themes.)

It is important for this assignment that you discuss and analyze the relationship of the theme between the works that you select. You are not simply pointing out the similarities and differences between the two works.

Your paper should also demonstrate your ability to analyze and integrate research materials into your own writing using correct MLA format. Your paper should also demonstrate your knowledge of elements of literature discussed in class.

Requirements:

- Typed; double-spaced, 12pt font; 4-5 pages in length
- Utilize at least two sources of information, not including the works that you select. These sources must be taken from reputable periodicals or the library’s electronic databases.
- Include an introduction, well-formed and argumentative thesis statement that clearly expresses the thematic connection between the two works and a conclusion
- Contain an effective analysis of quotations and examples that support the points of discussion that you present.
- Utilize correct MLA format and contain a Works Cited list. You must include Works Cited entries for the stories that you select in addition to your two other sources.

Due Dates:

Rough Draft – Friday, December 9, 2012

Final Draft – Friday, December 30, 2012
Read through the sample academic essay assignment thoroughly. Use the sample assignment to complete the areas in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Requirements</th>
<th>Required format:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Required Pages:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Required Sources:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Due Date(s):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Topic – What is the topic**

**Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much time will I devote to researching my topic?</th>
<th>Amount of time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due date for completing my research:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What are some possible types of sources that I might use for information? | Possible types of sources: |

**Brainstorming**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What techniques will I use to brainstorm ideas for my topic?</th>
<th>Techniques:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| How much time will I devote to brainstorming and outlining my ideas for the essay? | |

**Drafting**

| Write a draft of the essay based on the plan developed in the brainstorming stage. | Due date for completion of draft: |

**Editing/Revisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What areas will I review my essay draft for?</th>
<th>Types of resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due date for completion of editing and revisions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Topic Sentences

A topic sentence (also known as a focus sentence) encapsulates or organises an entire paragraph, and you should be careful to include one in most of your major paragraphs. Although topic sentences may appear anywhere in a paragraph, in academic essays they often appear at the beginning.

It might be helpful to think of a topic sentence as working in two directions simultaneously. It relates the paragraph to the essay's thesis, and thereby acts as a signpost for the argument of the paper as a whole, but it also defines the scope of the paragraph itself. For example, consider the following topic sentence:

Many fast-food chains make their profits from adding a special ingredient called "forget sauce" to their foods.

If this sentence controls the paragraph that follows, then all sentences in the paragraph must relate in some way to fast food, profit, and "forget sauce":

Made largely from edible oil products, this condiment is never listed on the menu.

This sentence fits in with the topic sentence because it is a description of the composition of "forget sauce."

In addition, this well-kept industry secret is the reason why ingredients are never listed on the packaging of victuals sold by these restaurants.

The transitional phrase "In addition" relates the composition of "forget sauce" to secret fast-food industry practices.

"Forget sauce" has a chemical property which causes temporary amnesia in consumers.

Now the paragraph moves on to the short-term effect on consumers:

After spending too much money on barely edible food bereft of any nutritional value, most consumers swear they will never repeat such a disagreeable experience.

This sentence describes its longer-term effects:

Within a short period, however, the chemical in "forget sauce" takes effect, and they can be depended upon to return and spend, older but no wiser.

Finally, I finish the paragraph by "proving" the claim contained in the topic sentence, that many fast-food chains make their profits from adding a special ingredient called "forget sauce" to their foods.

Analysing a Topic Sentence

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements. Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must
be the unifying force in the paragraph. Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way. Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

Consider the last paragraph about topic sentences, beginning with the topic sentence itself:

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements.

This is my **claim**, or the point I will prove in the following paragraph. All the sentences that follow this topic sentence must relate to it in some way.

Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must be the unifying force in the paragraph.

These two sentences show how the reader can compare thesis statements and topic sentences: they both make a claim and they both provide a focus for the writing which follows.

Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way.

Using the transitional word "further" to relate this sentence to those preceding it, I expand on my topic sentence by suggesting ways a topic sentence is related to the sentences that follow it.

Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

Finally, I wrap up the paragraph by stating exactly how topic sentences act rather like tiny thesis statements.

*Written by Dorothy Turner*

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Last updated: 2007.08.16