



chapter 1

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

This book will help you read and write critically for college courses. Although we have entered the electronic information age, where mastery of computer skills and visual literacy seem to be essential for understanding and maintaining our lives and careers, most college work still requires an ability to understand and reflect intelligently on written texts and, subsequently, to respond in writing to them. College courses typically involve the reading of challenging texts. As a college student, you will need to approach these texts with skills that go beyond those of casual reading, that is, the type of reading you may do for leisure, for pleasure or for escapism, or simply to pass time. Even in courses where a preponderance of work is in learning forms of knowledge and new technologies, such as computers, mathematics, and science, you are sure to find a healthy amount of reading that will supplement any other work done in the classroom or laboratory.

The reading and writing skills you develop during your college years will also help you in your future profession. Think of a lawyer reviewing legal history or preparing a legal brief, a doctor reviewing current literature on medical innovations or writing an article for a professional journal, or an environmental scientist reading and writing about issues regarding pollution and global warming. All these activities require the ability to think, read, and write about complex material. Learning the tools of critical reading and writing not only teaches you the "what" of an issue, but also helps you think about and respond intelligently to the relative strength of the writer's opinions, ideas, and theories. Critical thinking, reading, and writing enable you to distinguish between informed ideas and pure speculation, rational arguments and emotional ones, and organized essays and structurally deficient ones.

As you hone your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by tackling the essays in this anthology, you should soon understand how the written word is still the primary medium with which thinkers transmit the intricacies of controversial issues involving the family, society, politics, work, gender, and class. You will encounter complex texts that require you to extract maximum meaning

from them, compare your own views with those of the authors you read, and respond to what you read in an informed and coherent manner. The reading selections in this textbook have been chosen specifically to assist you in developing such skills. As you tackle these texts, you will realize that sound reading habits will permit you to understand the fine points of logic, reasoning, analysis, argumentation, and evaluation.

STEPS TO READING CRITICALLY AND ACTIVELY

You can find numerous reasons to rationalize a failure to read carefully and critically. You have a headache. You're hungry. The material is boring. The writer puts you to sleep. Your roommates are talking. You have a date. In short, there are many internal and external barriers to critical reading. Fortunately, there are techniques—a critical reading process—to guide you through this maze of distractions. Consider these five strategies:

1. *Develop an attitude of "critical consciousness."* In other words, do not be passive, uncritical, or alienated from the writer or the text. Instead, be active, critical, and engaged with the writer and his or her text.
2. *Read attentively.* Give your full attention to the text in order to understand it. Do not let your mind wander.
3. *Paraphrase.* Periodically restate what you read. Learn to process bits of key information. Keep a running inventory of highlights. Take mental or actual notes on the text's main points. (More information on paraphrase and summary appears in this chapter and in Chapter 3.)
4. *Ask questions.* If for any reason you are uncertain about any aspect of the text, pose a question about it and try to answer it yourself. You might seek immediate help from a friend or classmate. If you are unable to answer your question, ask for clarification from the instructor.
5. *Control your biases.* You must both control and correct any prejudices that might interfere with the claim, information, or tone of a text. You might, for example, have misgivings about a liberal or conservative writer, about a feminist or a creationist, but such strong emotions can erode your ability to keep an open mind and your power to think critically about a subject or issue.

These five strategies will help you begin to overcome the barriers to critical reading.

One way to view critical reading is through the concept of active reading. Active reading suggests that you, as a reader, have an obligation to yourself and the author to bring an alert, critical, and responsive perspective to your encounter with the written word. Active reading means learning to annotate

(a strategy discussed later in this chapter), to reflect on what you read, and to develop personal responses in order to prepare yourself for writing assignments that your instructor will present to you during the term. This process—reading critically in order to write critically—is not merely an “academic” exercise. It is a skill that can enrich you as a person throughout your life and career. It will teach you to respond critically to the admonitions of politicians or to the seductions of advertisements and, if you choose, to participate intelligently in the “national conversation,” which can lead to a rewarding life and responsible citizenship.

When you read an essay or any other type of text, you create meaning out of the material the author has presented. If the essay is relatively simple, clear, and concise, the experience that you construct from your reading may be very similar to what the author intended. Nevertheless, the way that you interact with even the most comprehensible texts will never be identical to the way another reader interacts.

Consider an essay that you will encounter in this anthology, Langston Hughes’s “Salvation.” A chapter from his autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), this essay tells of a childhood incident in which the young Hughes’s faith was tested. The essay focuses on a church revival meeting that Hughes was taken to and the increasing pressure he sensed at the meeting to “testify” to the presence of Jesus in his life. At first the young Hughes holds out against the fervor of the congregation, but ultimately he pretends to be converted, or “saved.” That night, however, he weeps and then testifies to something entirely unexpected: the loss of faith he experienced because Jesus did not “save” him in a time of need.

As your class reads this essay, individuals among you may be struck by the compressed energy of the narration and the description of the event; by the swift characterization and revealing dialogue; or by the conflict and mounting tension. Moreover, the heightened personal and spiritual conflict will force class members to consider the sad irony inherent in the title “Salvation.”

Even if your class arrives at a broad consensus on the intentions of the author, individual reader responses to the text will vary. Readers who have attended revival meetings will respond differently from those who have not. Evangelical Christians will see the text from a different perspective than will Catholics, Muslims, or Jews. African American readers (Hughes was black) may respond differently than white readers. Women may respond differently than men, and so on.

In this brief assessment of possible reader responses, we are trying to establish meaning from a shifting series of critical perspectives. Although we can establish a consensus of meaning over what Hughes probably intended, our own interpretation and evaluation of the text will be conditioned by our personal experiences, backgrounds, attitudes, biases, and beliefs. In other words, even as the class attempts to construct a common reading, each member of the class is also constructing a somewhat different meaning, one based on the individual’s own interaction with the text.

PREPARING TO READ

This textbook contains many essays covering a variety of subjects by writers from a wealth of backgrounds and historical periods. You may be familiar with some, unfamiliar with others. All, however, have something to say and a way of saying it that others have found significant. Hence, many have stood the test of time, whether a year, a decade, or centuries. Essays are a recognized genre, or form of literature, and the finest essays have staying power. As Ezra Pound said, “Literature is news that stays news,” and the best examples of the essay convey this sense of permanent value. Thus, you have an obligation to be an active and critical reader to do justice to the work that was put into these texts. Most were written with care, over extended periods of time, and by people who themselves studied the art of writing and the topics of their discourse. During your first week of class, you may wish to read some of their brief biographies to understand these authors’ personal and educational backgrounds, their beliefs and credos, and some of the significant moments of their lives. You will often find that there are logical connections between the stories of their lives and the topics they have written about.

Sharpening your reading skills will be important because you may not be able to personally choose the essays from the text. You may find some topics and essays more interesting than others. But if you are prepared to read critically, you will be able to bring the same set of skills to any selection your instructor assigns. With this principle in mind, we present an overview of the active reading process, which will culminate in a case study using this process with an essay in this chapter—“The Cult of Ethnicity,” by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

When you are given a reading assignment from the textbook, a good strategy in preparing to read is to locate the text as well as possible within its broader context. Read the biographical notes about the author. Focus on the title of the essay. What can you infer from the title? What is the length of the essay? Although many students delight at the thought of reading shorter texts rather than longer ones, you may find that this variable is not always the deciding one in determining how easily you “get through” the essay. Short essays can be intricate and difficult; long ones can be more transparent and simpler. A long essay on a topic in which you are interested may be more rewarding than a short essay that you find lacking in relevance. Other basic prereading activities can include noting whether there are section breaks in the essay, whether there are subheadings, whether the author has used footnotes, and if so, how extensive they are. Other preliminary questions to answer could be, “What is the date of the original publication of the essay? Is the essay a fully contained work or is it an excerpt from a larger text? Are there visual or mathematical aids, such as graphs, charts, diagrams, or lists? Because authors often use typographical signals to highlight things or to help organize what they have written, you might ask, Does the author use quotation marks to “signal” certain words? Is italic type used, and if so, what is its purpose? Are other books and authors cited in the essay? Does the author use organizational tools such as Arabic or Roman

numerals? Once you have answered these questions regarding mechanics, you will be prepared to deal more substantively with the essay as a unit of meaning and communication.

Preparation for reading also means understanding that you bring your own knowledge, opinions, experiences, and attitudes to the text. You are not an empty glass to be filled with the knowledge and opinions of the authors, but rather a learner who can bring to bear your own reflections on what you read even if you think your knowledge is minimal. Often we do not know just how much ability we have in thinking about a topic until we actively respond to what others confront us with in their writings. By tackling the reading assignments in the text, you will not only learn new information and confront opinions that may challenge your own, but find that reading frees up your ability to express your own opinions. For this reason, most English teachers look upon reading as a two-way process: an exchange between writer and reader.

Although the credentials and experience of a professional writer may seem impressive, they should not deter you from considering your own critical talents as you read. But first, you must find a way to harness those abilities.



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CRITICAL READING

It should be evident to you by now that you are not a mere recipient of information who passively accepts what the writer conveys. Instead, you should feel comfortable about engaging the author as you might a friend in a lively conversation or argument. And just as a talk with a friend involves active listening, rebuttal, use of facts, and logic, the interaction between yourself and the author needs to be a dynamic one as well. Active reading is so important in the learning process that one of America's most popular philosophers, Mortimer Adler, wrote an article that has become a classic on this topic. It is entitled "How to Mark a Book," and appears beginning on page 46.

Among the essential elements of your close reading are annotating, note taking, and questioning the text.

Annotating

Annotating refers to marking your text by making content notes, by using symbols such as question marks and exclamation points, and by recording personal reactions. Annotating is not, however, mere underlining or highlighting. These latter two methods often serve little purpose in helping you comprehend a text.

Critical Reading

Most likely, when you return to passages you've marked with these simple procedures, you will have forgotten why you felt they were important in the first place. If you do underline or highlight, you should be sure to link your marking with a note in the margin. Simply drawing attention to someone else's words does little in the way of expanding your own thoughts on a topic. Learning is best accomplished by restating ideas in your own words.

Note Taking

Many essays in your anthology will require more than jotting down marginal notes in order to comprehend them fully or to respond to them in depth. Just as you might take down notes during a classroom lecture, you may find it useful to take notes to supplement your annotations. You may wish, for example, to write down quotations so that you can see them together. Or you may wish to summarize the essay by outlining its key points, a reversal of the process you would use to develop your own essay, wherein you begin with an outline and expand it into paragraphs. By collapsing an essay into an outline, you have a handy reference of the author's thesis (main idea) and supporting points, and the methods used to develop them. Another function of note taking is to overcome the simple habit most of us have of thinking we will remember things without jotting them down, only to find out later we cannot recall significant information from memory. You will appreciate the benefits of taking notes when you tackle lengthy essays, which may run 15 or 20 pages in length.

Questioning the Text

Posing key questions about a text and then answering them to the best of your ability is a helpful means of understanding more cogently an essay's substance and structure. Certain basic questions are salient for nearly any text you confront, and answering them for yourself can be a powerful means of enhancing your comprehension. As you read your text, such questions help you spot the significant issues that lie within most essays, regardless of their form or length. It is a good habit to have these questions in mind as you read, and then to return to them once you've thought through your reading. They serve as guideposts along the way of your reading experience and assist you in focusing on those issues that are most important to a text. When you become comfortable with them, you will probably find that your mind automatically poses them as you read, making your comprehension of difficult texts easier.

- What is the thesis or main point of the text?
- What methods does the author use to support these points, for instance, illustration, example, citing authorities, citing studies or statistics, description, personal experience, or history?
- What value position, if any, does the author present? In other words, is the author either directly or indirectly presenting her or his moral framework on an issue, or is she or he summarizing or describing an issue?

- Does the author use any special terms or expressions that need to be elucidated to understand the essay? You will find that authors, when addressing innovative or revolutionary ideas within the context of their times, must use vocabulary that often needs to be defined. Take for example, the term *multiculturalism*. Exactly what does an author mean by that word?
- What is the level of discourse of the essay? Or what is the audience's level of educational attainment the author presumes?
- Who is the implied audience for the essay? Is it written for a specialized profession (such as scientists or educators), is it written for individuals with a focus on their particular role in society, for example, as parents or consumers or citizens?

The following essay, "The Cult of Ethnicity," by the influential historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., has been annotated to demonstrate how a student might respond to it. Schlesinger's essay also will be used to explain aspects of the reading and writing process as we move through this section.

This seems like the thesis. Where are his supports? Or is it the thesis?

Look these up. Demonstrates knowledge on the part of the author.

Historical figure—who was he?

The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples. Modern communication and transport accelerate mass migrations from one continent to another. Ethnic and racial diversity are more than ever a salient fact of the age.

But what happens when people of different origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, inhabit the same locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Ethnic and racial conflict—far more than ideological conflict—is the explosive problem of our times.

On every side today ethnicity is breaking up nations. The Soviet Union, India, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, are all in crisis. Ethnic tensions disturb and divide Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq, Cyprus, Nigeria, Angola, Lebanon, Guyana, Trinidad—you name it. Even nations as stable and civilized as Britain and France, Belgium and Spain, face growing ethnic troubles. Is there any large multiethnic state that can be made to work?

The answer to that question has been, until recently, the United States. "No other nation," Margaret Thatcher has said, "has so successfully combined people of different races and nations within a single culture." How have Americans succeeded in pulling off this almost unprecedented trick?

We have always been a multiethnic country. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, who came from France in the 18th century, marveled at the astonishing diversity of the settlers—"a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes . . . this promiscuous breed." He propounded a famous question: "What then is the American, this new man?" And he gave a famous answer: "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men." *E pluribus unum*.

The United States escaped the divisiveness of a multiethnic society by a brilliant solution: the creation of a brand-new national

identity. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to "forge a new American culture." By an intermixture with our people," President George Washington told Vice President John Adams, immigrants will "get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people." This was the ideal that a century later Israel Zangwill crystallized in the title of his popular 1908 play *The Melting Pot*. And no institution was more potent in molding Crevecoeur's "promiscuous breed" into Washington's "one people" than the American public school.

The new American nationality was inescapably English in language, ideas, and institutions. The pot did not melt everybody, not even all the white immigrants; deeply bred racism put black Americans, yellow Americans, red Americans and brown Americans well outside the pale. Still, the (infusion) of other (stocks) even of nonwhite stocks, and the experience of the New World reconfigured the British legacy and made the United States, as we all know, a very different country from Britain.

In the 20th century, new immigration laws altered the composition of the American people, and a cult of ethnicity erupted both among non-Anglo whites and among nonwhite minorities. This had many healthy consequences. The American culture at last began to give shamefully overdue recognition to the achievements of groups subordinated and spurned during the high noon of Anglo dominance, and it began to acknowledge the great swirling world beyond Europe. Americans acquired a more complex and invigorating sense of their world—and of themselves.

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the United States as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration.

And, in an excess of zeal, well-intentioned people seek to transform our system of education from a means of creating "one people" into a means of promoting, celebrating and perpetuating separate ethnic origins and identities. The balance is shifting from *unum* to *pluribus*.

That is the issue that lies behind the hullabaloo over "multiculturalism" and "political correctness," the attack on the (Eurocentric) curriculum and the rise of the notion that history and literature should be taught not as disciplines but as therapies whose function is to raise minority self-esteem. Group separatism crystallizes the differences, magnifies tensions, intensifies hostilities. Europe—the unique source of the liberating ideas of democracy, civil liberties and human rights—is portrayed as the root of all evil, and non-European cultures, is portrayed as citizens deleted, are presented as the means of redemption.

I don't want to sound (apocalyptic) about these developments. Education is always in (ferment) and a good thing too. The situation in our universities, I am confident, will soon right

Is this a partly American phenomenon? *prevents racial and ethnic conflict

Why?—classwt. explain

Note SS's use of historical process analysis

Vocab: infusion, stocks, zeal

Eurocentric, apocalyptic, ferment, Kleenex, crucible

Signals a warning—danger

Is this thesis or related to thesis?

Support against multiculturalism. General—where are the specific examples?

Is this an exaggeration? How does he know?

Who are these people? He doesn't mention them specifically.

Reality is stronger than "ideology"? Is this his "solution"?

A sharp conclusion → argument? Limited States must be example. This is the thesis.

What has this annotating accomplished? It has allowed the reader/annotator to consider and think about what she has read, integrate her ideas with the ideas of the author, challenge those she may disagree with, raise issues for further study, find the seeds of ideas that may become the focus of an essay in response to the writing, review what she has read with more facility, and quickly and efficiently return to those parts of the essay she found the most salient.

The aforementioned strategies will assist you in responding intelligently in the classroom, remembering the main points of what you have read, and internalizing the critical reading skill so that it becomes automatic. However, such activities are not as challenging as the ultimate goal of most of your reading assignments, which will be to respond in formal writing to the works you've read. For this, you will need to enhance your study skills a bit further so that they will prepare you to write.

Formal writing assignments require you to demonstrate that you understand what you have read and are able to respond in an informed and intelligent manner to the material. They also require you to use appropriate form, organization, and exposition. Above all, regardless of what you want to express, you will have to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely. To this end, you will need to acquire skills that you can call on when it comes to writing at length about what you have read. To do so, you will find your ability to paraphrase, summarize, and quote directly from the original material particularly helpful.

itself. But the impact of separatist pressures on our public schools is more troubling. If a (Klee) of the Ku Klux Klan wanted to use the schools to disable and handicap black Americans, he would hardly come up with anything more effective than the "Afrocentric" curriculum. And if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life.

I remain optimistic. My impression is that the historic forces driving toward "one people" have not lost their power. The eruption of ethnicity is, I believe, a rather superficial enthusiasm stirred by romantic ideologues on the one hand and by unscrupulous con men on the other: self-appointed spokesmen whose claim to represent their minority groups is carelessly accepted by the media. Most American-born members of minority groups, white or nonwhite, see themselves primarily as Americans rather than primarily as members of one or another ethnic group. A notable indicator today is the rate of intermarriage across ethnic lines, across religious lines, even (increasingly) across racial lines. "We Americans," said Theodore Roosevelt, "are children of the Crucible."

The growing diversity of the American population makes the quest for unifying ideals and a common culture all the more urgent. In a world savagely rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, the United States must continue as an example of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together.

When you move to this next phase, however, try to avoid a common practice among readers that causes them to waste time and effort put into study. Many students think they have completed a reading assignment when they read the last word of an essay. They utter a sigh of relief, look inside the refrigerator for something to eat, call up friends, or go Web browsing. However, as a critical reader, you need to spend additional time reinforcing what you have read by thinking about the author's views, considering her or his rhetorical methods, and reviewing or adding to your notes and annotations. For example, one culminating activity at this point can be to either mentally or verbally summarize what you have read. You can summarize verbally by enlisting a classmate and simply stating in your own terms the main points of your reading assignment. This oral summarizing will prevent a common problem many readers experience: the natural tendency to forget most of what they read shortly after reading.

BEYOND CONTENT: FOCUSING ON PROCESS

An essayist attempts to communicate a message to his or her audience. This message is the *content*. But "message making" is a process—the exchange of information through a shared system of verbal or visual symbols. Your goal in reading critically is to understand not just the informational content of a text but also how the writer shares meaning and typically tries to influence your beliefs and behavior. A good writer, to paraphrase Plato in *Phaedrus*, tries to "enchant" your mind.

From Plato to the present, theorists have stressed this interactional aspect of reading and writing. Someone constructs a message (for our purposes, a written text), transmits it, and we have to receive it, decode it, and respond to it. Thus any "piece" of writing, whether designed to inform, persuade, or entertain, is the product of a complex process of actions and interactions by which we perceive, order, and verify (or make sense of) what we read. Whether we have the capacity to grasp the argument of a text, think logically about a thesis, or understand the cultural background of a writer and how it informs a text depends on how well we perceive the ways in which a writer creates meaning in a text.

Defined simply, *perception* is the process by which you create meaning for your world. As a process, it deals with the way you interpret the behavior of others as well as yourself. Thus, understanding perception helps to explain how we process information about self, others, and our world. Our sensory organs—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling—provide us initial contact with the outside world, enabling us to establish our perceptual field of reference. However, we also perceive what we want to perceive, which we call *psychological selectivity*. Finally, there is a third form of perception known as *cultural selectivity*: from a cultural perspective, we are conditioned by our culture's code of values and modes of understanding. For example, the phenomenon of *binocular rivalry*

demonstrates that people of two different cultures exposed to two pictures at the same time will remember elements compatible with their own culture. With critical reading, you can have diverging interpretations of passages or an entire text because you perceive them from different perspectives.

In addition to differences of perception, you should also be mindful of how an author presents information. How an author presents her or his information is as important as what information the author presents. Strategies for writing may include the overall pattern of an essay—for example, is it an argument, an explanation, a definition, an evaluation, a comparison or contrast? While you may not think of essays in terms of genre, as you do literature (which may be presented in the form of poetry, the short story, the play, and so on), such forms can help you understand the motivation behind the writer's work and assist you as you seek out the more significant passages in a piece of writing. For example, if the essay is argumentative, you should focus on the supporting points the author has provided, determining whether they offer adequate support for the author's point of view. In an essay arguing for the return to traditional family values, for instance, the use of one anecdote to prove a point would probably not be enough to persuade most readers.

As you read an essay, you should also consider the author's *purpose* for writing. An essay about a personal experience would probably contain physical description; at the same time, the author's purpose would probably be to communicate an element in his or her life that can provide insight into personal development in general. Among the more common purposes are the following: to inform, to persuade, to disprove, to describe, to narrate, to demonstrate, to compare and contrast, to seek a solution to a problem, to explain a process, to classify, to define, to warn, and to summarize. While most essays contain a variety of purposes, one often will stand out among the others.

PARAPHRASING, SUMMARIZING, QUOTING

As you prepare to respond to the writing of others, you need to develop skills so that your own writing will reflect the hard work that went into the reading process. To this end, you can benefit from learning some shortcuts that will assist you in garnering information about what you have read. These skills include paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting directly from another author's work.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means taking what you have read and placing it in your own words. Students occasionally complain about this process, using the argument that it is a waste of time to paraphrase when the author's own words are the best way to articulate his or her ideas. However, paraphrasing serves two main purposes. The more obvious one is that it prevents you from plagiarizing, even inadvertently, what you have read. In terms of learning, however, it is particu-

larly helpful because it requires that you digest what you have read and rewrite it. As you do so, you will develop writing patterns that over time will improve your ability to communicate. Paraphrasing forces you to truly think about what you have read and reinforces what you've read, since your mind has now been cognitively stimulated. You may find that paraphrasing often leads you to challenge the text or think more deeply about it simply because the paraphrasing process requires that you fully comprehend what you read.

It is important while paraphrasing to keep in all the essential information of the original while not using any of the author's original vocabulary or style. One rule of thumb is to never use three or more words that appeared together in the original. However, you can keep words such as articles (*a, an, the*) and conjunctions (*and, for, but, etc.*). The following are two examples of paraphrasing that demonstrate unsuccessful and successful application of the technique.

Original

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the United States as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration.

Paraphrase 1

But, pressed too far, the focus on ethnicity has dangerous consequences. It suggests that the United States is a nation made up of separate ethnic and racial groups rather than individuals. It goes against the American ideals of integration and assimilation.

There are several things wrong with paraphrase 1. Rather than change key words, the writer has merely rearranged them. The sentence structure is very similar to that of the original, as is the ordering of ideas. If the student were to incorporate this paraphrase into her or his own essay, the teacher would probably consider it a form of plagiarism. It is simply too close to the original. To truly paraphrase, you must substitute vocabulary, rearrange sentence structure, and change the length and order of sentences. These strategies are more evident in paraphrase 2.

Paraphrase 2

Our country is made up of both individuals and groups. The recent trend to focus on the idea that one's ethnic background should have a major influence on one's perspective as a citizen goes against the moral foundations of the United States. It is the very concept of accepting American culture as one's own that has made our country strong and relatively free from cultural conflict.

Summarizing

A summary is a short, cohesive paragraph or paragraphs that are faithful to the structure and meaning of the original essay you've read, but developed in your own words and including only the most essential elements of the original. Summaries are particularly helpful when you are planning to write lengthily

assignments or assignments that require that you compare two or more sources. Because a good summary requires that you use many of the skills of active reading, it helps you to "imprint" the rhetorical features and content of what you have read in your memory, and also provides you with a means of communicating the essence of an essay to another person or group. To summarize successfully, you need to develop the ability to know what to leave out as much as what to include. As you review your source, the annotations and notes you have made previously should help immensely. Since you want to deal with only the essentials of the original, you must delete all unimportant details and redundancies. Unlike paraphrasing, however, most summaries require that you stick to the general order of ideas as they are presented in a text. They also should not be mere retellings of what you have read, but should present the relationships among the ideas in an essay. It may be helpful to think of a summary as analogous to a news story, in which the essential details of what happened are presented in an orderly chronological fashion, because readers can best understand the gist of a story that way. It is simply the way the human mind, at least the Western mind, operates. Another strategy in summarizing is to imagine that the audience you are summarizing for has not read the original. This places a strong responsibility on you to communicate the essentials of the text accurately.

The following six steps should help you in preparing a summary. After you've reviewed them, read the summary that follows and consider whether it seems to have fulfilled these suggestions.

1. Read the entire source at least twice and annotate it at least once before writing.
2. Write an opening sentence that states the author's thesis.
3. Explain the author's main supporting ideas, reviewing your notes to make sure you have included all of them. Be careful not to plagiarize, and use quotations only where appropriate.
4. Restate important concepts, key terms, principles, and so on. Do not include your opinion or judge the essay in any way.
5. Present the ideas in the order in which they originally appeared. Note that in this way summarizing is different from paraphrasing, where staying too close to the original order of words may be detrimental to the process.
6. Review your summary once it has been completed. Consider whether someone who hasn't read the original would find your summary sufficient to understand the essence of the original work. You may also wish to have classmates or friends read the essay and ask them to furnish their verbal understanding of what you've written.

Now, review the following summary of Schlesinger's essay and determine whether it adheres to these points.

Sample Summary

Schlesinger argues that the recent surge of interest in ethnic separatism that is being touted by some whom he considers self-styled spokespersons for various ethnic groups threatens the unifying principle of our country's founders and undermines the strength of

our society. This principle is that the American identity that was forged by its creators would be adopted by all peoples arriving here through a process of assimilation to our culture, values, and system of government so that cultural conflict could be avoided. Although he finds some merit in the idea that recognizing the contributions of certain groups who have been kept out of the national focus, for example, "nonwhite minorities," is a positive move, he fears that this can be taken to an extreme. The result could be the development of antagonism between ethnic groups solely on the basis of overemphasizing differences rather than recognizing similarities. He further argues that efforts to fragment American culture into subgroups can have the effect of jeopardizing their own empowerment, the opposite of the movement's intention. He gives the example of "Afrocentric" schooling, which he claims would only harm students enrolled in its curriculum. Despite this new interest in the "cult of ethnicity," the author is optimistic that it is of limited effect. He claims that most Americans still strive toward unity and identify themselves as Americans first, members of ethnic or racial groups second. He buttresses this belief by explaining that intermarriage is growing across racial, religious, and ethnic lines. This striving toward unity and identification with America among groups is particularly important today since their diversity is continuously increasing.

Quoting

Sayings and adages are extremely popular. You find them quoted in everyday speech, printed in calendars, rendered in calligraphy and framed and hung in homes, and spoken by public figures. These are, in effect, direct quotes, although the authors may be anonymous. Direct quotations often have a unique power because they capture the essence of an idea accurately and briefly. Another reason is that they are stylistically powerful. You may find in an essay a sentence or group of sentences that are worded so elegantly that you feel you simply wish to savor them for yourself or plan to use them appropriately for a future writing assignment. Other times, you may wish to use direct quotations to demonstrate to a reader the effectiveness of an original essay or the authoritative voice of the author. And at still other times, it may simply be necessary to quote an author because her or his vocabulary just cannot be changed without injuring the meaning of the original. Review the following quotations taken from the Schlesinger essay, and consider how paraphrasing them would injure their rhetorical power.

Direct Quotations That Reflect the Conciseness of the Original

"The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples."

"On every side today ethnicity is breaking up nations."

"And if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life."

Direct Quotations That Have Particular Stylistic Strength

"The pot did not melt everybody."

"The balance is shifting from *unum* to *pluribus*."

Direct Quotations That Establish the Writer's Authority

"The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to forge a new, American culture. 'By an intermixture with our people,' President George Washington told Vice President John Adams, immigrants will 'get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people.'"

"A notable indicator today is the rate of intermarriage across ethnic lines, across religious lines, even (increasingly) across racial lines."

Direct Quotation That Demonstrates Conceptual Power

"The eruption of ethnicity, is, I believe, a rather superficial enthusiasm stirred by romantic ideologies on the one hand and by unscrupulous con men on the other."

Avoiding Plagiarism

When you employ summary, paraphrase, and quotation in an essay or a research paper, you must avoid *plagiarism*—the attempt to pass off the work of others as your own. The temptation to plagiarize is one of the oldest "crimes" in academe but also an unfortunate by-product of the computer revolution, for there are numerous opportunities for harried, enterprising, or—let's face it—dishonest students to download bits of information or entire texts and appropriate them without acknowledgment. At the same time, you should be aware that there are numerous Web sites and software programs that allow your instructors to locate even the most inventive forms of plagiarism—right down to words and phrases—and that when writing research papers, you may be required to attach all downloaded materials. Be warned: College teachers treat plagiarism as academic treason. You can fail a course if you plagiarize, be suspended from college, and even expelled.

We will treat plagiarism in greater detail in Chapter 3, which presents information on writing research papers, but for now you can avoid plagiarism by following these three basic rules:

- Cite (provide a reference for) all quoted, summarized, or paraphrased information in your paper, unless that information is commonly understood. (For example, you would not have to cite the information that two planes flew into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, because it is common knowledge.)
- Cite all special phrases or unique stylistic expressions that you derive from another writer's work. You might love a phrase by one of the famous writers in this book—let's say E. B. White or Virginia Woolf—but that writer invented it, it belongs to him or her, and you cannot employ it without acknowledging the source.
- Work hard to summarize and paraphrase material in your own words. Constantly check your language and sentence structure against the

language and syntax in the source that you are using. If your words and sentences are too close to the original, change them.

Finally, it is perfectly legitimate to ask your instructor or a tutor in your college's writing center to look at your draft and render a verdict on any information you have summarized, paraphrased, or quoted. Whether this material been taken intentionally or unintentionally from another source is immaterial. It is your responsibility to present honest written work.



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For an interactive tutorial on avoiding plagiarism, go to:
Research > Avoiding Plagiarism

READING AND ANALYZING VISUAL TEXTS

In this new era of information technology, we seem to be immersed in a visual culture requiring us to contend with and think critically about the constant flood of images we encounter. From advertising to film to video to the Internet, must respond with increasing frequency not only to written but also to visual messages—images that typically are reinforced by verbal elements. Consequently, it is important to perceive the powerful linkages that exist in today's culture between visual and verbal experience.

Frequently in courses in engineering, social science, computer science, humanities, fine arts, and elsewhere, you have to analyze and understand visual elements that are embedded in texts. Textbooks increasingly promote visual elements as frames of reference that help readers to comprehend and appreciate information. Some visual elements—charts, tables, and graphs—are integral to an understanding of verbal texts. Other visuals—comic art, drawings, photographs, paintings, advertisements—offer contexts and occasions for enjoyment and deeper understanding of the reading, writing, and thinking processes. Visual images convey messages that often are as powerful as well-composed written texts. When they appear together, image and word are like French doors both opening to reveal a world of heightened perception and understanding.

When visual elements stand alone, as in painting and photography, they often make profound statements about human experience and frequently reflect certain persuasive purposes that are composed as skillfully as an argumentative essay. Consider, for example, the series that the great Spanish artist Francisco Goya painted, "The Disasters of War," a powerful statement of humankind's penchant for the most grotesque and violent cruelties. In the late 20th century, photographers of the Vietnam War, using a modern visual medium, similarly captured the pain and suffering of armed conflict, as in Eddie Adams's poignant stills of the execution of a prisoner by the notorious chief of the Saigon national police, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan. In the framed sequence, the chief of police aims his pistol at the head of the prisoner, presses the trigger, and the viewer,

THE WRITING PROCESS

Whether you have been provided an assignment by your instructor or developed your own topic, the various tools for critical reading and analysis that you have mastered should now equip you with the foundation for what is necessary to embark on your own writing assignment. Essays are normally a three-part writing process. The three stages are termed prewriting, drafting, and revising. To illuminate the writing process, we will examine strategies employed by several student and professional writers, including one student, Jamie Taylor, as she read and responded to Schlesinger. But first we require an overview of the writing process, starting with the origins and development of a writer's ideas.

Annie Dillard, one of today's preeminent essayists, stresses the primacy of the creative imagination in the writing process in the selection starting on page 58. Dillard uses the central metaphor of building a house to describe the act of writing, but within her essay one can detect the three stages of the writing process: prewriting ("The line of words is a miner's pick, a woodcarver's gouge, a surgeon's probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow"), drafting ("You lay down the words carefully, watching all the angles"), and revising ("The part you must jettison is not only the best-written part, it is also, oddly, the part which was to have been the very point").

Think of the process of writing as a craft involving the planning, transcribing, polishing, and production of a text for an audience. In Old English, the word *craft* signifies strength and power. By treating writing as a craft, you empower yourself to make the most complex compositional tasks manageable. By thinking of the writing process habit of mind involving prewriting, writing, and revision, you can create effective essays and documents.

Prewriting

Prewriting, which you have already been engaged in as you have negotiated the reading-writing connection, is the discovery, exploration, and planning stage of the composing process. It is the stage in which you discover a reason to write, select and narrow a subject, consider audience and purpose, and engage in preliminary writing activities designed to generate textual material. During the prewriting process, you are free to let ideas incubate, to let thoughts and writing strategies ripen. You are free also to get in the mood to write. Ernest Hemingway used to sharpen all his pencils as preparation for a day's writing; the French philosopher Voltaire soaked his feet in cold water to get the creative juices flowing. Professional writers understand the importance of prewriting activities in the composing process, but college writers often undervalue or ignore them completely.

Purpose and Audience Any writing situation requires you to make choices and decisions about purpose, audience, planning, writing, revision, and transmission of your text. Determining your purpose or goal—the reason why you

are writing—at the outset of the composing process is one of the first steps. It prevents you from expending useless energy on thinking that is ultimately unimportant, misdirected, or unrelated to the problem because it forces you to ask, What do I hope to obtain from this text? With a specific purpose in mind, you start to anticipate the type of composing task ahead of you and to identify the problems that might be inherent in this task.

Traditionally, the main forms of writing—narration, description, exposition, and argumentation—help to guide or mold your purpose.

Form	Purpose	Example
Narration	To relate a sequence of events	To tell about an accident
Description	To provide a picture or produce an impression	To describe a moth
Exposition	To explain, inform, analyze	To compare two teachers
Argumentation	To convince or persuade	To oppose abortion

Most writing actually combines more than one of these rhetorical modes or forms, but these basic categories help shape your text to a specific purpose.

Even as you determine your purpose, you must also create common ground between yourself and your audience. In fact, to define your audience is to define part of your problem. Think of your audience as the readers of your text. What do they know about the topic? How do they perceive you—your status, expertise, credibility?

What do you know about their opinions and backgrounds? Are they likely to agree or disagree with you? (This last question is especially important in argumentative writing, which will be discussed in the next chapter.) By defining your audience carefully, you can begin to tailor your text. Only by analyzing your readership will you be able to appeal to an audience.

Freewriting and Brainstorming Two methods of getting in touch with what you already know or believe are freewriting and brainstorming. Freewriting is quite simple. Merely select a predetermined amount of time, say anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes, and write down everything that you can think of regarding the subject at hand. Don't worry about punctuation or grammar. This activity is mainly to get your cognitive wheels rolling. Brainstorming is a variant of freewriting in which you jot down ideas and questions, often in numbered form. If you find freewriting and brainstorming helpful as techniques, you will probably find the length of time that suits you best. When you have finished, review what you have written. A well-known composition expert, Peter Elbow, explains the value of freewriting in the selection starting on page 61. The freewriting that Elbow describes can help any writer generate ideas, but freewriting and brainstorming can also help writers respond to others' ideas. For example, examine the following freewriting and brainstorming exercises by a student, James Moore, which he wrote after reading an excerpt from Schlesinger's "The Cult of Ethnicity."

Prewriting Sample

This essay shows that the author really knows his history because he cites so many historical figures, places, and can quote word for word authorities that back up his argument. He makes a great argument that America's strength is in its diversity and at the same time its unity. I never thought of these two things as being able to complement one another. I always thought of them as being separate. It opens my mind to a whole new way of thinking. One thing that would have strengthened his argument, though, is the fact that although he criticizes people who want to separate themselves into subgroups, he doesn't really mention them by name. He's great when it comes to advancing his own argument but he seems to be a bit too general when he comes to attacking the opposition. I would have liked it if he had mentioned by name people who are undermining America's strengths and listen in their own words.

Brainstorming Sample

1. The author says that ideological conflict isn't such a big problem, but what about the gap between rich and poor? Maybe if there were less of a gap, people wouldn't look for "false idols."
2. Schlesinger seems to be part of the white mainstream. Does this mean he is destined not to understand fully the reasons why people on the margins of society get so tempted to join "cults"?
3. He uses supporting points very well but doesn't exactly explain why "multiculturalism" and "political correctness" are happening now in our society. What is it about today that has opened the door to these ideas?
4. There are so many references to places with ethnic tensions around the world. It would be great to study one of them and see if they have any similarities to the ones that exist in the United States.
5. He seems to be writing for a very educated audience. I wonder really if he can reach the "common person" with this kind of sophisticated writing. I don't know about most of the places he mentions.
6. What's the solution? That could be the start of a topic for my paper. I don't think the author offers any.

Let's consider the benefits these processes can have. First, you can comment on the subject matter of the essay without censoring your thoughts. This prepares you for the second reading by marshaling a more coherent idea of your own perspective. Freewriting or brainstorming can be a tool that helps you understand how you can have something to contribute in the writer-reader "conversation" or helps you see a topic in a new way. For example, in the freewriting example, the student discovered for himself the idea that the strength of American society is a combination of commonality and diversity. Second, during the brainstorming process, you might come up with a potential idea for a response essay, as the student did in the example.

Now let us return to the prewriting process that Jamie Taylor followed.

Brainstorming Notes

1. Schlesinger seems to be saying that multiculturalism poses a danger because it threatens to create ethnic divisiveness rather than healthy identification.

2. This not only undermines us now, but threatens the very democratic principles upon which the United States was founded.
3. He says America must set an example for the rest of the world, which is torn with racial and ethnic strife.
4. He believes that there is a small group of individuals with a "hidden agenda" who are trying to create this divisiveness. These individuals are self-centered and have their own interests at heart, not the interests of the people they represent.
5. One flaw in the essay was that it seemed vague. He didn't mention any names or give specific examples. Only generalities.
6. He suggests the "battle" will be won by ordinary citizens; for example, he cites the many intermarriages occurring today.
7. Although he sees danger, he is optimistic because he thinks democracy is a strong institution.
8. He writes from a position of authority. He cites many historical figures and seems very well read.
9. The major problem I see in his essay is that he seems to lump everyone together in the same boat. He doesn't give enough credit to the average person to see through the hollowess of false idols. You don't need a Ph.D. to see the silliness of so many ideas floating around out there.
10. So many things to consider, how should I focus my essay??? What should be my theme?
11. Hmmmm. Ideal!!! Since I agree with his basic points, but find he doesn't provide specifics, and doesn't give the average person enough credit to see through the emptiness of cult rhetoric, why not use my personal observations to write a response paper in which I show just how reasonable we are in distinguishing mere rhetoric from substance?

Outlining In addition to this brainstorming, Ms. Taylor also developed a scratch outline—yet another prewriting strategy—to guide her into the drafting stage of the composing process.

Outline

- I. Introduction: Summarize essay and thesis; provide counterthesis.
- II. Unlabeled life as a demonstration of "ethnic" democracies.
- III. The emptiness and false promises of self-styled ethnic leaders.
- IV. The rejection of "home-grown" cults.
- V. Conclusion.

Although Jamie Taylor employed brainstorming and a scratch outline to organize her thoughts prior to writing her essay, not everyone uses these prewriting activities. Some students need to go through a series of prewriting activities, while others can dive into a first draft. Nevertheless, discovering the materials and form for an essay includes a search for ideas, a willingness to discard ideas and strategies that don't work, an ability to look at old ideas in a fresh way, and a talent for moving back and forth across a range of composing activities. Rarely

does that flash of insight or first draft produce the ideal flow of words resulting in a well-written and well-ordered essay?

Professional writers have their own unique approaches to the composing process. For example, Annie Dillard is a prolific keeper of journals, from which she extracts ideas for essays and books. She also jots down notes, often in rough outline form. Here are some notes she jotted down, based on journal entries and her essay "Death of a Moth."

Moth in candle:

*the poet—materials of world, of bare earth at feet, sucked up, transformed, subsumed to spirit, to air to light
the mystic—not through reason, but through emptiness
the martyr—virgin, sacrifice, death with meaning.*

Her "moth essay," as she calls it, evolved from journal entries, doodles, and several drafts, and then fit into a much larger book that she was writing.



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For more information on prewriting strategies, go to:
Writing > Prewriting

Drafting

Everyone approaches the entire composing process differently. There are, however, certain basic principles for the drafting stage that you must consider. These principles are discussed in the following sections.

Developing the Thesis Every essay requires a main idea or thesis that holds all your information together. What you seek is not just any idea relevant to the bulk of your topic, but the underlying idea that best expresses your purpose in writing the essay. Your thesis is the controlling idea for the entire essay.

The thesis requires you to take a stand on your topic. It is your reason for wanting to inform or persuade an audience. The noted teacher and scholar Sheridan Baker has expressed nicely this need to take a stand or assume an angle of interpretation: "When you have something to say about *cats*, you have found your underlying idea. You have something to fight about: not just 'Cats,' but 'The cat is really man's best friend.'" Not all thesis statements involve arguments or fights. Nevertheless, you cannot have a thesis unless you have something to demonstrate or prove.

The thesis statement, which normally appears as a single sentence near the beginning of your essay, serves five important functions:

- It introduces the topic to the reader.
- It limits the topic to a single idea.

- It expresses your approach to the topic—the opinion, attitude, or outlook that creates your special angle of interpretation for the topic.
- It may provide the reader with hints about the way the essay will develop.
- It should arouse the reader's interest by revealing your originality and your honest commitment to the topic.

Here is a typical thesis statement by a student:

The automobile—America's metallic monster—takes up important public space, pollutes the environment, and makes people lazy, rude, and overweight.

In this thesis, the writer has staked out a position, limited the topic, and given the reader some idea of how the essay actually will develop.

Your thesis cannot always be captured in a single sentence. Indeed, professional writers often offer an implied or unstated thesis or articulate a thesis statement that permeates an entire paragraph. Basically, you should ask if a thesis hooks you. Do you find it provocative? Do you know where the author is coming from? Does the author offer a map for the entire essay? These are some of the issues that you should consider as you compose your own thesis sentences.



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For more information on developing a thesis, go to:
Writing > Thesis

Writing Introductory Paragraphs Your introduction should be like a door opening into the world of your essay. A good introduction entices readers into this world by arousing their curiosity about the topic and thesis with carefully chosen material and through a variety of techniques. The introduction, normally a single, short paragraph composed of a few sentences, serves several important functions:

- It introduces the topic.
- It states the writer's attitude toward the subject, normally in the form of a thesis statement.
- It offers readers a guide to the essay.
- It draws readers into the topic through a variety of techniques.

A solid introduction informs, orients, interests, and engages the audience. "Beginnings," wrote the English novelist George Eliot, "are always troublesome." Getting the introduction just right takes effort, considerable powers of invention, and often several revisions. Fortunately, there are special strategies that make effective introductions possible:

- Use a subject-clarification-thesis format. Present the essay's general subject, clarify and explain the topic briefly, and then present your attitude toward the topic in a thesis statement.

- Offer a brief story or incident that sets the stage for your topic and frames your thesis.
- Start with a shocking, controversial, or intriguing opinion.
- Begin with a comparison or contrast.
- Use a quotation or reference to clarify and illustrate your topic and thesis.
- Ask a question or series of questions directed toward establishing your thesis.
- Offer several relevant examples to support your thesis.
- Begin with a vivid description that supports your main idea.
- Cite a statistic or provide data.
- Correct a false assumption.

All these strategies should introduce your topic and state the thesis of the essay. They should be relatively brief and should direct the reader into the body of the essay. Finally, they should reveal your perspective and your tone or voice. In each introductory paragraph, the reader—your audience—should sense that you are prepared to address your topic in an honest and revealing manner.



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For more information on writing introductory paragraphs, go to:
Writing > Introductions

Writing Body Paragraphs The body is the middle of the essay. Usually the body consists of a series of paragraphs whose purpose is to satisfy your readers' expectations about the topic and thesis you presented in the introduction. The body of an essay gives substance, stability, and balance to your thesis. It offers facts, details, explanations, and claims supporting your main idea.

Body paragraphs reflect your ability to think critically, logically, and carefully about your topic. They are self-conscious units of expression whose indentations signal a new main point (or topic sentence) or unified and coherent units of thought. The contour created by the series of body paragraphs that you design grows organically from the rhetorical or composing strategies that you select. As the English critic Herbert Read states in *English Prose Style*, "As thought takes shape in the mind, it takes a shape. . . . There is about good writing a visual actuality. It exactly reproduces what we should metaphorically call the contour of our thought. . . . The paragraph is the perception of this contour or shape." In other words, we see in the shape of an essay the shape of our thoughts. The contour created by the series of body paragraphs proceeds naturally from the material you include and the main point that you use to frame this material in each paragraph.

Effective paragraph development depends on your ability to create a unit of thought that is *unified* and *coherent*, and that presents ideas that flesh out the topic sentence or controlling idea for the paragraph, thereby informing or con-

vincing the reader. To achieve a sense of completeness as you develop body paragraphs, be sure to have enough topic sentences and sufficient examples of evidence for each key idea. College writers often have problems writing complete essays with adequately developed body paragraphs. Remember that topic sentences are relatively general ideas. Your primary task is to make readers understand what those ideas mean or why they are important. Your secondary task is to keep readers interested in those central thoughts. The only way to accomplish these two related goals is by explaining the central ideas through various kinds of evidence or support.

Strategies for Development Different topics and paragraphs lend themselves to different types of development. These types of rhetorical approaches are essentially special writing and reasoning strategies designed to support your critical evaluation of a topic or hypothesis. Among the major rhetorical approaches are description, narration, illustration, process analysis, comparison and contrast, causal analysis, definition, classification, and argumentation. Each strategy might very well serve as your dominant approach to a topic. On the other hand, your essay might reflect a variety of methods. Remember, however, that any blending of rhetorical strategies should not be a random sampling of approaches but should all contribute to your overall point.

Description Good descriptive writing is often your best tool for explaining your observations about objects, people, scenes, and events. Simply, description is the creation of a picture using words. It is the translation of what the writer sees into what the writer wants the reader to imagine. Description has many applications in academic courses. For example, for a psychology course, you might need to describe the behavior of an autistic child. At an archeological dig or site, you might need to indicate accurately how a section of the excavated area looks. In a botany course, you might need to describe in detail a particular plant.

Effective description depends on several characteristics:

- It conveys ideas through images that appeal to our various senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.
- It selects and organizes details carefully in a clearly identifiable spatial ordering—left to right, top to bottom, near to far, and so forth.
- It creates a dominant impression, a special mood or feeling.
- It is objective or subjective depending on the writer's purpose, the demands of an assignment, or the expectations of an audience.

In the following paragraph from her book *Spanish Harlem*, Patricia Cayo Sexton captures the sights, sounds, and rhythms of life in New York's East Harlem:

Later, when the children return from school, the sidewalks and streets will jump with activity. Clusters of men, sitting on orange crates on the sidewalks, will play checkers or cards. The women will sit on the stoop, arms folded, and

watch the young at play; and the young men, flexing their muscles, will look for some adventure. Vendors, ringing their bells, will hawk hot dogs, orange drinks, ice cream; and the caressing but often jarring noise of honking horns, music, children's games, and casual quarrels, whistles, singing, will go on late into the night. When you are in it you don't notice the noise, but when you stand away and listen to a taped conversation, the sound suddenly appears as a background roar. This loud stimulation of the senses may produce some of the emotionalism of the poet.

Narration Telling stories—or narration—is a basic pattern of organizing your thoughts. You employ narration on a daily basis—to tell what happened at work, in the cafeteria, or on Saturday night. Narration is also essential to many forms of academic writing ranging from history, to sociology, to science. When planning and writing narration, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Present the events of your narration in a logical and coherent order. Make certain that you link events through the use of appropriate transitional words.
- Select the narrative details carefully in order to suit the purpose of the essay. Narrate only those aspects of the event that serve to illustrate and support your thesis.
- Choose a point of view and perspective suitable for your topic and audience. Narrative point of view may be either first or third person. A first-person narrative is suitable for stories about yourself. A third-person narrative (*he, she, it, they*) conveys stories about others. The narrative perspective you use depends on your audience and purpose. Obviously, you would use a different perspective and tone in narrating a laboratory experiment than you would narrating a soccer match you participated in.
- Dialogue, if appropriate to your topic, may add realism and interest to your narrative.
- Limit the scope of the event you are narrating and bring it to a suitable conclusion or climax.

When narration is used for informational or expository purposes, the story makes a point, illustrates a principle, or explains something. In other words, in expository narration, the event tends to serve as evidence in support of your thesis.

Here is a sample student paragraph based on narration:

Like most little girls I thought it would be very grown up to get my hair done in a beauty parlor instead of by my mother or older sister. For more than a month I cried and bawled my family. Finally, after hearing enough of my whining, my mother gave in and made an appointment for me. At the beauty parlor, I sat with my mother and a few older women, naively waiting for my transformation into another Shirley Temple. Finally the hairdresser placed me in a chair and began to chop a mass of hair onto the floor and then subject me to a burning sensation as rollers wound my remaining hair tight. The result was a classic example of the overworked permanent. At home later that day, I tried

washing and rewashing my hair to remove the tangled mess. It took a week until I would see anyone without a scarf or hat over my head and a month before I could look at someone without feeling that they were making fun of me the minute I turned my back. In a way I feel that such a fruitless journey to the hairdresser actually helped me along the road to adulthood since it was a perfect example of a disappointment that only time and patience, rather than tantrums and senseless worrying, can overcome.

Narration answers the question, What happened? It can be used to tell real or fictional stories, to relate historical events, to present personal experience, to support an analysis of events. It has broad utility in college as a critical writing skill.

Illustration To make your paragraph or essay complete—without padding, repetition, or digression—be sure to have sufficient examples or illustrations to support key ideas. Different topics and paragraphs lend themselves to different types of examples or supporting evidence. Here are some types of illustration that will help you write well-developed paragraphs and essays:

Fact: The Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of public schools in 1964.

Statistic: A majority of schools in San Diego that were once 90 percent black are now almost 45 percent white.

Example: One example of the success of San Diego's integration effort is its magnet schools.

Personal Experience: I attended the new computer science magnet school from 1996 to 1998. . . .

Quotation: According to the *Phi Delta Kappan*, "On the first day of Los Angeles' mandatory desegregation program, 17,700 out of the total of 40,000 were not on the bus."

Process: With the magnet concept, a school first creates a special theme and emphasis for its curriculum. Then, it

Comparison and Contrast: By contrast, when Los Angeles announced its forced busing plan, an estimated 15.1 percent of the white population moved out of the system into private schools.

Case Study: Jamie, an eighth-grader, had seen very few black students at the Math-Science Center prior to the implementation of San Diego's desegregation plan. . . .

Illustrations develop your paragraph beyond the topic sentence. Such illustrations or examples may be short or extended. However, to make sure that your paragraphs are complete and properly developed, watch out for weak or poorly presented illustrations. For every main idea or topic sentence in a paragraph, use specific supporting evidence that sufficiently proves or amplifies your point. If you do not have the right evidence in the proper amount, your paragraph and essay will be undeveloped, as in the following case:

The concept of choice does seem to appeal to students. On the first day of San Diego's new plan, the only people who were absent from the programs who had volunteered were those who were sick.

This two-sentence paragraph has promise but does not follow through with the main idea adequately. The concept at the heart of the topic sentence is clearer and more complete in the revised version:

The concept of choice does seem to appeal to San Diego's parents and students. On the first day of San Diego's new plan, the only people who were absent from the program who had volunteered were those who were sick. In contrast, on the first day of Los Angeles's mandatory desegregation program, 17,700 out of the total of 40,000 were not on the bus, according to the *Phi Delta Kappan*. Moreover, when Los Angeles announced its busing plan, an estimated 15.1 percent of the white population moved out of the district or into a private school. In San Diego, there was virtually no "white flight."

In the revision, the student chose to use contrasting evidence, highly specific in nature, to provide adequate support for the topic sentence. Other details and illustrative strategies might have been selected. In selecting illustrative material, you should always ask: Are there other examples that are more lively, specific, concrete, revealing, or interesting? It is not enough to just present examples. Illustration should be as effective as possible.

Process Analysis When you describe how something works, how something is assembled, how something is done, or how something happens, you are explaining or analyzing a process. The complexity of your explanation will depend on how complex the process itself is, how detailed you want your explanation to be, and what you want your audience to be able to do or understand as a result of reading your explanation. Are you providing relatively simple how-to-do-it instructions for a relatively simple task, or are you attempting to explain a complicated laboratory experiment or computer program? The explanation of a process can make demands on your analytical and problem-solving abilities because you have to break down operations into component parts and actions. Process analysis always involves the systematic presentation of step-by-step or stage-by-stage procedures. You must show *how* the steps or parts in a process lead to its completion or resolution.

The explanation of processes is relevant to many college courses. Such topics as the stages of economic growth, Hobbes's view of the evolution of the state, the origins of the city, the development of the English lyric, the phenomenon of photosynthesis, and the history of abstract art could benefit from process analysis. Often process analysis can be combined with other writing strategies or even be subordinated to a more dominant writing strategy like narration, to which it bears a certain resemblance.

As with all other forms of mature and effective writing, you must assess your audience when writing process papers. You must decide whether you primarily want to inform or to give directions. When you give directions, you nor-

ally can assume that your audience wants to learn to do what you tell them about. If your primary purpose is to inform, you must assess the degree of interest of general readers and approach your subject from an objective perspective. Remember that there are natural, physical, mechanical, technical, mental, and historical types of processes. Certain topics might cut across these types, yet in each instance, your purpose is to direct the reader in how to do something or to inform the reader about the nature of the process.

Your analysis of a process can occur at paragraph level or it can control the development of an entire essay. Note how Laurence J. Peter, author of the famous book *The Peter Prescription*, uses process to structure the following paragraph:

If you are inexperienced in relaxation techniques, begin by sitting in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor and your hands resting easily in your lap. Close your eyes and breathe evenly, deeply, and gently. As you exhale each breath let your body become more relaxed. Starting with one hand direct your attention to one part of your body at a time. Close your fist and tighten the muscles of your forearm. Feel the sensation of tension in your muscles. Relax your hand and let your forearm and hand become completely limp. Direct all your attention to the sensation of relaxation as you continue to let all tension leave your hand and arm. Continue this practice once or several times each day, relaxing your other hand and arm, your legs, back, abdomen, chest, neck, face, and scalp. When you have this mastered and can relax completely, turn your thoughts to scenes of natural tranquility from your past. Stay with your inner self as long as you wish, whether thinking of nothing or visualizing only the loveliest of images. Often you will become completely unaware of your surroundings. When you open your eyes you will find yourself refreshed in mind and body.

Peter establishes his relationship and his purpose with his audience in the very first sentence, and then offers step-by-step procedures that move readers toward a full understanding of the process. Remember that you are the expert when writing about a process, and that you have to think carefully about the degree of knowledge that your audience shares.

To develop a process paper, follow these guidelines:

- Select an appropriate topic.
- Decide whether your primary purpose is to direct or explain.
- Determine the knowledge gap between you and your audience.
- Explain necessary equipment or define special terms.
- Organize paragraphs in a complete sequence of steps.
- Explain each step clearly and completely.
- State results or outcomes.

Numerous subjects lend themselves to process analysis. You must decide, especially for a particular course, which topic is most appropriate and which topic you know or want to learn about the most.

Comparison and Contrast Comparison and contrast is an analytical method organizing thought to show similarities and differences between two

persons, places, things, or ideas. Comparing and contrasting comes naturally to us. If, for example, you must decide on which candidate to vote for, you might compare the party affiliations, records, and positions on issues of both candidates to find the one that best meets your expectations. Comparison and contrast serves three useful purposes in writing:

1. To evaluate the relative worth or performance of two things by comparing them point-for-point.
2. To increase understanding of two familiar things by exploring them for significant similarities and differences.
3. To explain something unfamiliar by comparing it with something familiar.

The organization of comparison-and-contrast paragraphs and essays is fairly specialized and somewhat more prescribed than other methods of writing. The following are some basic guidelines for preparing comparison-and-contrast papers.

First and foremost, limit your comparison to only two subjects (from here on we'll refer to them as A and B). If you attempt to work with more, you may find your writing becomes confused. Subjects A and B should be from the same category of things. You would do better, for example, to compare two jazz pianists than to compare a jazz pianist and Dixieland jazz as a whole. Moreover, there needs to be a *purpose* for your comparison. Unless you explain your purpose, the comparison, which might otherwise be structurally sound, will ultimately seem meaningless.

The organization of comparison-and-contrast papers generally follows two basic patterns, or methods: the *block method* and the *alternating method*. The block method presents all material on subject A and then all material on subject B. With the block method, each subtopic must be the same for both subjects. The alternating method presents all the material on each subtopic together, analyzing these subtopics in an AB, AB, AB pattern. Although there is no hard-and-fast rule, the alternating method is probably the best choice for most essays in order to avoid the standard pitfalls of the block method. Unless you are an experienced writer, using the block method can lead to an insufficiently developed paper, with some subtopics receiving more attention than others. It can also lead to a paper that seems like two separate essays, with a big chunk about subject A followed by a second disconnected chunk about subject B. Whether you are using the block or alternating method, follow through in an orderly manner, stating clearly the main thesis or reason for establishing the comparison, and providing clear transitions as you move from idea to idea.

Consider the following paragraph, written by a student, John Shin:

The story of Noah and the Great Flood is probably the best known story of a deluge in the Mesopotamian Valley. However, there are several other accounts of a large flood in the valley. Of these, the Akkadian story of Utnapishtim, as told by Gilgamesh, is the most interesting due to its similarities to the biblical story of Noah. Utnapishtim is a king who is forewarned of the coming of a great flood. He is advised to build an ark and does so.

After many days the waters recede and Utnapishtim exits the ark and is turned into a god. The stories of Noah and Utnapishtim bear a striking resemblance in several parts: a god or gods cause a flood to punish men and women; arks, of certain dimensions, are built; animals are taken on board; birds are released to find land; and the arks come to rest on mountains. These parallels are so striking that many think the two to be the same tale.

Given the design of this paragraph, we can assume that the student could develop body paragraphs that deal in detail with each of the key resemblances in the order they are mentioned: the coming of the flood, the building of the ark, the animals taken on board, the release of the birds, and the lodging of both arks on the mountain top. By employing the alternating method, the student constructs a well-organized comparative framework for his analysis of the story of Noah and the story of Gilgamesh.

Causal Analysis Frequently in college writing you must explain the causes or effects of some event, situation, or phenomenon. This type of investigation is termed *causal analysis*. When you analyze something, you divide it into its logical parts or processes for the purpose of close examination. Thus phenomena as diverse as divorce in America, the Civil War, carcinogens in asbestos, the death of Martin Luther King Jr., or the eruption of Mount St. Helens can be analyzed in terms of their causes and effects.

Cause-and-effect relationships are part of everyday thinking and living. Why did you select the college you now attend? Why did you stop dating Freddy or Barbara, and what effect has this decision had on your life? Why did the football team lose five straight games? You need causal analysis to explain why something occurred, to predict what will occur, and to make informed choices based on your perceptions. With causal analysis, you cannot simply tell a story, summarize an event, or describe an object or phenomenon. Instead, you must explain the *why* and *what* of a topic. The analysis of causes seeks to explain why a particular condition occurred. The analysis of effects seeks to explain what the consequences or results were, are, or will be.

Causal reasoning is common to writing in many disciplines: history, economics, politics, sociology, literature, science, education, and business, to list a few. Some essays and reports focus on causes, others on effects, still others on both causes and effects. Sometimes even the simplest sort of causal reasoning based on personal experience does not admit to the complete separation of causes and effects but depends instead on recognition that causes and effects are interdependent. For example, the following paragraph from a student's sociology paper focuses on a cause-and-effect relationship:

My parents came to New York with the dream of saving enough money to return to Puerto Rico and buy a home with some land and fruit trees. Many Puerto Ricans, troubled by the problem of life on the island, find no relief in migration to New York City. They remain poor, stay in the barrio, are unable to cope with American society and way of life, and experience the destruction of their traditionally close family life. My parents were fortunate. After spending most of their lives working hard, they saved enough to return to

the island. Today they tend their orange, lemon, banana, and plantain trees in an area of Puerto Rico called "El Paraíso." It took them most of a lifetime to find their paradise—in their own backyard.

Here the writer blends personal experience with a more objective analysis of causes and effects, presenting the main cause-effect relationship in the first sentence, analyzing typical effects, providing an exception to this conventional effect, and describing the result.

There are times when you will want to focus exclusively on causes or on effects. For example, in a history course the topic might be to analyze why World War II occurred.

It is popularly accepted that Hitler was the major cause of World War II, but the ultimate causes go much deeper than one personality. There were long-standing German grievances against reparations levied on the nation following its defeat in World War I. Moreover, there were severe economic strains that caused resentment among the German people. Compounding these problems was the French and English reluctance to work out a sound disarmament policy and American noninvolvement in the matter. Finally, there was the European fear that Communism was a much greater danger than National Socialism. All these factors contributed to the outbreak of World War II.

Note that in his attempt to explain fully the causes of an event, the writer goes beyond *immediate* causes, that is, the most evident causes that trigger the event being analyzed. He tries to identify the *ultimate* causes, the deep-rooted reasons that completely explain the problem. In order to present a sound analysis of a problem, you need to be able to trace events logically to their underlying origins. Similarly, you have to engage in strategic thinking about immediate and ultimate effects in order to explain fully an event's results.

Writing about cause-and-effect relationships demands sound critical thinking skills with attention to logic and thorough preparation for the demands of the assignment. To write effective and logical essays of causal analysis, follow these guidelines:

- Be honest, objective, and reasonable when establishing your thesis. As a critical thinker, you have to avoid prejudices and logical fallacies, including unsupported claims, broad generalizations and overstatements, and false relationships. (For a discussion of logical fallacies, see pages 122–124.)
- Distinguish between causes and effects, and decide whether you plan to focus on causes, effects, or both. As a prewriting strategy, draw up a list of causes and a corresponding list of effects. You can then organize your paper around the central causes and effects.
- Distinguish clearly between immediate and ultimate causes and effects. Explore those causes and effects that best serve the purpose of your paper and your audience's expectations.
- Provide evidence. Do not rely on simple assertions. Statistics and testimony from reliable authorities are especially effective types of evidence to support your analysis.

- Try to establish links between causes or effects. Seek a logical sequence of related elements, a chain of causality that helps readers understand the totality of your topic.

Ultimately there are many ways to write about causes and effects, depending on whether you are looking for explanations, reasons, consequences, connections, results, or any combination of these elements.

Definition Concepts or general ideas often require careful *definition* if readers are to make sense of them or make intelligent decisions. Could you discuss supply and demand in economic theory without knowing the concept of the invisible hand? And isn't it best to know what a political conservative actually believes in before casting your vote? Concepts form the core of any discipline, line of inquiry, or problem. Because concepts are abstract, they may mean different things to different readers. In order to make ourselves understood, we must be able to specify their meaning in a particular context.

There are three types of definition. The simple *lexical* definition, or dictionary definition, is useful when briefly identifying concrete, commonplace, or uncontroversial terms for the reader. Many places, persons, and things can be defined in this manner. The *extended* definition is an explanation that might involve a paragraph or an entire essay. It is frequently used for abstract, complex, or controversial terms. The third form of definition is the *stipulative* definition, in which you offer a special definition of a term or set limitations on your use of the term. A solid definition, whether it is lexical, extended, or stipulative, involves describing the essential nature and characteristics of a concept that distinguish it from related ideas.

Consider the following paragraph by a student, Geeta Berrera:

The degree of loneliness that we feel can range from the mild or temporary case to a severe state which may eventually lead to depression or other psychological disorders. Being able to recognize the signs and signals of loneliness may help you to avoid it in the future. Do you find yourself unable to communicate with others? If so, you might be lonely. Do you find it difficult to put your faith in other human beings? If so, then you are setting up a situation that may be conducive to loneliness because you are preventing yourself from becoming too close to another person. Do you find yourself spending great amounts of time alone on a regular basis? Do you find that you are never invited to parties or other social events? Are you unable to love or care for another human being because you are afraid of permanent responsibilities and commitments? These are all signs and signals of either loneliness or situations that may eventually lead to loneliness. Loneliness is the feeling of sadness or grief experienced by a person at the realization that he or she lacks the companionship of other people.

Notice how the student introduces and emphasizes the central concept—loneliness—that is defined in this paragraph. She adds to the definition through a series of questions and answers—a strategy that permits her to analyze the qualities or manifestations of the concept. These symptoms serve as examples that reveal what is distinctive or representative about the condition of loneliness.

Definition can be used for several purposes. It may explain a difficult concept like phenomenology or a little-known activity like cricket. Definition can be used to identify and illustrate the special nature of a person, object, or abstract idea.

Classification Classification is a mode of critical thinking and writing based on the division of a concept into groups and subgroups, and the examination of important elements within these groups. We have generalized ideas of classes of objects that help us organize and thereby understand the world. Many of these concepts lend themselves to classification. You think and talk frequently about types of college teachers, types of cars, types of boyfriends or girlfriends, types of movies or music. When registering for courses, you know that English is in the humanities, psychology in the social sciences, geology in the physical sciences; you select these courses on the basis of consistent classification principles, perhaps distribution requirements or the demands of your major. What you are doing is thinking about concepts within a class, sorting out and organizing information, and often evaluating possible alternatives. Classification, in short, is a basic mode of critical thought.

As a pattern of writing, classification enables you to make sense of large and potentially complex concepts. You divide a concept into groups and subgroups, and you classify elements within categories. Assume, for instance, that your politics professor asks for an analysis of the branches of the American federal government. You divide the federal government into the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and, depending on your purpose, you subdivide even further into departments, agencies, and so forth. Then, according to some consistent principle or thesis—let's say a critical look at the erosion of the division of powers—you develop information for each category reflecting common characteristics. Essentially, if you classify in a rigorous and logical way, you sort out for analysis the parts and ideas within a scheme, progressing from general to specific in your treatment of the topic.

In developing a classification essay, you also have to determine the *system* of classification that works best for the demands of the assignment. The system you select would depend to an extent on your reader's expectations and the nature of the subject. Imagine that you have been asked to write an essay on sports by a physiology teacher, a psychology teacher, or a sociology teacher. Your system might be types of sports injuries for the physiology professor, behavior patterns of tennis players for your psychology professor, or levels of violence and aggression in team sports for your sociology professor. For a broad concept like sports, there are many possible classificatory systems depending on the purpose of your paper.

Although several classification and division strategies might be appropriate for any given concept, the following guidelines should be reviewed and applied for any classification essay:

- Think about the controlling principle for your classification. *Why* are you classifying the concept? *What* is the significance? Create a thesis statement that gives your reader a clear perspective on your classification scheme.
- Divide the subject into major categories and subdivide categories consistently. Make certain that you isolate all important categories and that these categories do not overlap excessively.
- Arrange the classification scheme in an effective, emphatic order—chronological, spatial, in order of importance, or from simple to complex.
- Present and analyze each category in a clear sequence, proceeding through the categories until the classification scheme is complete.
- Define or explain any difficult concepts within each category, providing relevant details and evidence.
- Combine classification with other appropriate writing strategies—comparison and contrast, process analysis, definition, and so forth.

Examine the following student paragraph:

To many people, fishing is finding a "fishy-looking" spot, tossing a hooked worm into the water, and hoping that a hungry fish just happens to be nearby. Anyone who has used this haphazard method can attest to the fact that failures usually outnumber successes. The problem with the "bait and wait" method is that it is very limited. The bait has less chance of encountering a fish than it would if it were presented in different areas of water. A more intelligent approach to fishing is to use the knowledge that at any given moment fish can be in three parts of a lake. Assuming that a lake has fish, anglers will find them on the surface, in the middle, or on the bottom of the lake. Fishing each of these areas involves the use of a separate technique. By fishing the surface, fishing the middle, or fishing the bottom, you greatly increase the chances of catching a fish.

This example is the student's introductory paragraph to a classification essay that blends description, process analysis, comparison and contrast, and the use of evidence to excellent effect. From the outset, however, the reader knows that this will be a classification essay.

Argumentation Argumentation is a form of critical thinking in which you try to convince an audience to accept your position on a topic or persuade members of this audience to act in a certain way. In a sense, everything is an argument for much of what you read and write, see and hear, is designed to elicit a desired response. Whether reading texts, viewing various media forms, or listening to the spoken word (especially of politicians), you know that just about anything is potentially debatable.

Argumentation in writing, however, goes beyond ordinary disagreements. With an argumentative essay, your purpose is to convince or persuade readers in a logical, reasonable, and appealing way. In other words, with formal argumentation you must distinguish mere personal opinion from opinions based on

reasons derived from solid evidence. An argumentative essay has special features and even step-by-step processes that will be treated in greater detail in the next chapter. For now, it is worth noting that solid argumentative writing can combine many of the forms and purposes that have been discussed in this chapter. Your understanding of such forms and purposes of discourse as narration, illustration, analysis, and comparison and contrast and the ways these strategies can combine in powerful ways will help you compose solid argumentative essays.

Above all, with argumentation you must develop what Virginia Woolf called "some fierce attachment to an idea." Once you commit yourself to a viewpoint on a topic or issue, you will find it easy to bring an argumentative edge to your writing. Consider the following excerpt from a well-known essay by Caroline Bird that begins with the provocative title "College Is a Waste of Time and Money":

A great majority of our 9 million college students are in school not because they want to be or because they want to learn. They are there because it has become the thing to do or because college is a pleasant place to be; because it's the only way they can get parents or taxpayers to support them without working at a job they don't like; because Mother wanted them to go, or some other reason entirely irrelevant to the course of studies for which college is supposedly organized.

Clearly Bird's claim has that argumentative edge you encounter in essays designed to convince readers of a particular viewpoint or position on an issue. Do you agree or disagree with Bird's claim? How would you respond to her assertions? What evidence would you provide to support your own claim?

Argumentation is a powerful way to tap into the aspirations, values, and conduct of your audience. It makes demands on readers and writers to do something, believe something, or even become somebody different—let's say a more tolerant person or a more active citizen. True, argument can provoke conflict, but it can also resolve it. In fact, many experts today emphasize the value of argument in solving problems and defusing or managing conflicts.

At the outset of any argument process, you must recognize that you have a problem to solve and decisions to make. Problem solving often is at the heart of argumentation; it is a process in which situations, issues, and questions are analyzed and debated or decisions arrived at. The basic steps to problem solving in argumentation are these:

1. Define and analyze the problem. Examine all available information to identify the problem precisely.
2. Interpret the facts and review alternative approaches.
3. Make a claim or a decision—that is, assert the best course of action.
4. Implement the decision in order to persuade or convince your audience that the problem has been addressed and solved.
5. Evaluate the outcome in follow-up documents.

At times, it will be hard to diagnose a problem and find solutions for it. At other times, there is no ideal solution to a problem. Argumentation is not a simple academic exercise but rather an indispensable tool in personal and professional situations. It is indispensable in harnessing increasingly complex political, economic, social, and technological trends on both a domestic and global scale. Moreover, argument can produce ethically constructive and socially responsible results. Argument makes special demands on a writer that will be treated comprehensively in the next chapter.

Writing End Paragraphs If an essay does not have a strong, appropriate ending, it may leave the reader feeling confused or dissatisfied, a sense that the intention and promises built up in earlier parts of the essay have not been fulfilled. By contrast, an effective closing paragraph leaves the reader with the impression that the essay is complete and satisfying.

The techniques that follow permit you to end your essay emphatically and with grace:

- Use a full-circle pattern. Echo or repeat an opening phrase, idea, or detail that you presented in your introductory paragraph.
- State your conclusions, proofs, or theories based on the facts and supporting ideas of the essay. This strategy works especially well in papers for social science, science, and philosophy courses.
- Show the outcome or effects of the facts and ideas of the essay.
- Suggest a solution as a way to clarify your position on the problem you have discussed.
- Ask a question that sums up the main point of the essay.
- Offer an anecdote, allusion, or lighthearted point that sums up your thesis.
- Use a quotation that supports your main point or illuminates an aspect of the topic.

Other basic ways to end an essay include restating your thesis and main points, calling for action, providing a final summary evaluation, or looking at future consequences based on the essay's analysis or argument. A closing, like your introduction, should be brief. It is your one last attempt at clarity, one last chance to illuminate your topic.



For more information on writing endings, go to:
Writing > Conclusions

Student Essay

Here is the essay that Taylor wrote in response to Schlesinger's "The Cult of Ethnicity." Consider the strategies that she used to make her composing process a success.

Jamie Taylor
Humanities 101, sec. 008
Professor Fred Segal
4 November 2005

Cultist Behavior or Doltish Behavior?

Introductory paragraph presents Schlesinger's main argument, amplifies Schlesinger's inferred claims, and then presents the writer's counterargument.

In Schlesinger's "The Cult of Ethnicity," the author warns that there are forces at work within our nation that undermine our principles of democracy. These forces come in the guise of individuals and groups who claim that they know what's right for the people whom they represent. Although he doesn't mention them all specifically, one can infer he means that certain leaders from the African American community, the Latino community, the Native American community, the Asian community, and so forth are advocating strong identification within groups to keep their identities alive since they claim Eurocentric culture has had a history of stealing and suppressing their own historic roots. But Schlesinger seems to fear that only divisiveness can result. In this regard, he does not give the individual enough credit. Rather than have a paternalistic attitude about what he fears these groups are doing, he should give more credit to the members of these groups to be able to discern which messages regarding ethnicity to accept as being benign and which to reject as being downright silly.

Take for example, the many clubs in the average college or university. Nearly every ethnic group is represented by one of these organizations. For example, my university has many groups that represent African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, even subgroups like the Korean Society, the Chinese Student Association, and so on. Belonging to these groups gives students a healthy place to socialize, discuss common areas of interest and concern, and assist with community outreach. For example, many of these clubs sponsor programs to give demonstrations of cultural traditions such as cooking, dance, clothing, and so on to civic and business groups. They also assist the needy in gaining access to social services, particularly for shut-ins and the elderly who may not speak English. Also, there is strength in numbers, and the fact that these clubs are popular attests to the fact that they tolerate a range of ideas so that no one "ideology" is promoted over another. Besides, if that were to happen, it is the right of the organization to vote a person out of office or membership. To say that these clubs promote divisiveness would be like saying that the Newman Society for Catholic students or Hillel House for Jewish students promotes religious intolerance.

Second, self-styled leaders of various racial and ethnic groups—in their efforts to be divisive—actually help people to see through their rhetoric, or at least, to apply only that which is

The first body paragraph presents Taylor's first point supported with evidence and examples.

The second point offers a unique slant on divisive ethnic and racial leaders and the ability of Americans to reject their claims. Again, specific examples and evidence buttress Taylor's argument.

reasonable and reject that which is intolerable. Because of today's media, such leaders cannot "hide" their views and thus can become their own worst enemies when presenting them in front of a national audience. For example, Louis Farrakhan has not only alienated Jewish individuals owing to his open anti-Semitism, and many among the gay population for his antigay sentiments, but many African Americans as well, particularly women, who often condemn him for his patriarchal views regarding the family and society. A simple proof of his lack of power is the fact that he has been presenting these antidemocratic ideals for decades now, and there is little evidence that anyone is listening to them. Another example is the late Rabbi Meyer Kahane, who advocated the expulsion of all Arabs from Israel. An open opponent of democracy, he was condemned by Jewish leaders in the United States to the point where he was shunned from any discussion regarding religious issues.

Finally, one can feel confident that even within the margins of mainstream white America, cultist groups are their own worst enemy. Take for example, the various groups of survivalists (primarily white Americans), white extremists and separatists, anti-gay groups, and radical anti-abortionists. The philosophy and tactics of these organizations are condemned by the vast majority of Americans owing to their antidemocratic postures, not to mention their often violent, even murderous activities. They may capture the headlines for a while, but they will never capture the hearts of Americans so long as we stay true to the "measures and laws" that Washington spoke of in his discussion with John Adams.

In conclusion, the open democratic society we have created is just too strong a force to be weakened or undermined by "romantic ideologies" or "unscrupulous con men" as Schlesinger puts it. Mr. Schlesinger has little to worry about. Just look around your school or university cafeteria. There's no white section or Latino section or Asian section. Nowadays, it's just one big American section.

The writer's third and final point encompasses a variety of "antidemocratic" groups and rejects their "postures."

The conclusion returns to Schlesinger, while recapitulating Taylor's main points.

Revising

Revising—the rethinking and rewriting of material—takes place during every stage of the composing process. It is integral to the quest for clarity and meaning. "Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what one's saying," declares celebrated American author John Updike. Similarly, the famous essayist E. B. White admits, "I rework a lot to make it clear." If these two great prose stylists revise material in order to seek clarity for their ideas, then you also should adopt the professional attitude that you can improve what you first say or think and what you first put down on paper. In fact, one trait that distinguishes experienced from inexperienced writers is that the professional writers understand fully the need to revise.

Revision is an art. It is the only way to make your writing match the vision of what you want to accomplish. Whether at word, sentence, paragraph, or essay level, you should develop a repertoire of choices that will permit you to solve writing problems and sharpen your ideas. You might also choose to share your draft with another reader who can let you know what is or is not working and give you suggestions for improvement. To make the process of revision worthwhile, you should ask yourself the following questions during your prewriting and drafting activities (you can also give these questions to your reader):

- Is my essay long enough (or too long) to meet the demands of the assignment?
- Is my topic suitable for the assignment?
- Do I have a clear thesis statement?
- Does my writing make sense? Am I communicating with my reader instead of just with myself?
- Have I included everything that is important to the development of my thesis or argument?
- Is there anything I should discard?
- Do I offer enough examples or evidence to support my key ideas?
- Have I ordered and developed paragraphs logically?
- Do I have a clear beginning, middle, and end?

Once you have answered these questions, you will be able to judge the extent to which you have to revise your first draft.

Proofreading Proofreading is part of the revision process. You do not have final copy until you have carefully checked your essay for mistakes and inconsistencies. It differs from the sort of revision that moves you from an initial draft to subsequent versions of an essay in that it does not offer the opportunity to make major changes in content or organization. It does give you a last chance to correct minor errors that arise from carelessness, haste, or inaccuracy during writing, typing, or word processing.

When you proofread, do so word by word and line by line. Concentrate on spelling, punctuation, grammar, mechanics, and manuscript form. Read each sentence aloud—from the computer screen or your hard copy. If something sounds or looks wrong to you, consult a handbook, dictionary, or other reference. Then make corrections accordingly.

Here are some basic guidelines for proofreading your essay:

1. Check the title. Are words capitalized properly?
2. Check all words in the essay that should be capitalized.
3. Check the spelling of any word you are uncertain about.
4. Check the meaning of any word you think you might have misused.
5. Check to see if you have unintentionally omitted or repeated any words.
6. Check paragraph form. Have you indented each paragraph?

7. Check to make certain you have smooth, grammatically correct sentences. This is your last chance to eliminate awkward and grammatically incorrect sentences.

Responding to Editorial Comments Even when you submit what you *think* is the final version of your essay, your teacher might not think that the essay has reached its best possible form. Teachers are experienced in detecting essays' strengths and weaknesses, pinpointing mistakes, and suggesting how material can be improved. Their comments are not attacks; they do want you to pay attention to them, to recognize and correct errors, and possibly to revise your essay once again—most likely for a higher grade. If you receive editorial comment in an objective manner and respond to it constructively, you will become a more accurate and effective writer.

When reading your essays, your instructor will use standard correction symbols that appear in English handbooks. He or she will make additional comments in the margins and compose an overall assessment of the paper at the end. Any worthwhile comment on your paper will blend supportive observations with constructive criticism. Often your instructor will offer concrete suggestions for revision. When you receive a graded paper, you typically are expected to make the necessary revisions and either add it to your portfolio or resubmit the essay.

Ultimately, refinement is integral to the entire writing process. From reading materials that you confront at the outset and respond to in various ways, you move through many composing stages to create a finished product. In *The Field of Vision*, the American novelist and critic Wright Morris refers to the important task of refinement that confronts the writer: "By raw material, I mean that comparatively crude ore that has not yet been processed by the imagination—what we refer to as *life*, or as experience, in contrast to art. By technique I mean the way the artist smelts this material down for human consumption." Your best writing is the result of this smelting process, which involves the many strategies covered in this introduction that are designed to help you acquire greater control over the art of critical reading and writing. Donald M. Murray's essay "The Maker's Eye: Revising Your Own Manuscripts," starting on page 65, offers one writer's summation of the stages of the revision process.