

# Writing Guide

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William J. Perry Center for  
Hemispheric Defense Studies

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## **Scope of the Writing Guide**

Please note that this guide is tailored to address academic papers and does not include writing tips for modes of communication such as correspondence.

It was written specifically for the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and, therefore, is tailored to a bilingual audience that specializes in politico-military affairs.

# Getting Started

## Selecting a Topic

Your topic is the subject about which you will write. Your professor might assign a specific topic to analyze, or you might have the freedom to choose your own area of exploration.

**TOPIC**  
the subject about  
which you will write

- Consider what your assignment asks you to do
- Try to find a topic that truly interests you
- Try writing your way to a topic
- Inform yourself about your topic

Consult a variety of sources on your topic, including:

- library catalog
- periodical indexes
- bibliographies
- suggestions from your instructor
- primary vs. secondary sources
- journals
- books
- other documents

## Narrowing Your Topic

- Consider several different ways of looking at your topic
- Talk with your course instructor and classmates about your topic
- Focus on one aspect of your topic
- Pose your topic as a question to be answered or a problem to be solved

A good topic is relevant. As you begin to write your paper, think of what makes your paper important to your reader. This will help you both as you are making your argument and when it comes time to write your conclusion, which, as you will read later, should explain how your paper relates to the larger concepts behind an author's work or a genre of writing.

## Developing Your Topic

When brainstorming about your topic, come up with a list of questions about it. Some academics suggest that open-ended questions beginning with "how" and "why" often make the best starting points. If you can answer one or more of these

### **BRAINSTORMING**

Solving specific problems,  
amassing information,  
stimulating creative thinking  
and developing new ideas  
through unrestrained and  
spontaneous discussion

questions, you can make your answers into your thesis statement.

For example, if you are writing a paper about climate change in Latin America, you might ask:

- How does climate change affect a country's economy?
- How does climate change occur?
- Why is climate change important to Latin American policymakers?
- How does climate change affect the drug trade?

However, different people have different styles of brainstorming and writing. If you have trouble thinking of an argument that you would like to make about your topic before you begin your paper, try free writing about the topic. Don't worry about structure or proofreading; just write about the topic and comment on the portions of the text that come to mind. Often, once you have written a few pages, you will begin to see that you

**FREE WRITING**  
- Writing down your thoughts on a topic without structure or proofreading  
- As you write, comment on the portions of the text that come to mind.

have naturally begun to make an argument about the text. This argument will be your thesis statement. Free writing can be less efficient than the more traditional method of finding a thesis statement because much free writing has to be revised or discarded while you are drafting the paper. Still, it is often the best option for students who are having difficulties crafting arguments.

### Organizing Your Paper

Typically, a paper includes four basic parts:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- Bibliography or Works Cited

Writing an outline and prospectus can help you organize your thoughts into an actual structure for your paper. When doing so, consider the following questions:<sup>1</sup>

- **What is the topic?** How is the subject defined (is there any special use of terminology or context)? What are the main research questions the study aims to answer?
- **Why is it significant?** Why is the author addressing this topic? What have other scholars written about this subject, and how is this author's approach, information,

or perspective different? What need or gap does this proposed study fill in the scholarly conversation? What new approach to a familiar topic does it propose to offer? What will be the study's original and special contributions to this subject?

- **What is my thesis** or purpose statement?
- **What background material is relevant?** What are the main sources that will be used to explore this subject? Why are these sources appropriate?
- **What organizational plan will best support my purpose?**
- **Do I have the skills and resources necessary to address this topic?** In particular, will you require funding to travel to archives, gain access to collections, or acquire technical equipment? Do you have the special skills (languages, technical expertise) that this project might require?

# Writing the Introduction

Most students are familiar with the concept of introductory paragraphs: they provide the reader with context and deliver the paper's thesis. It sounds simple enough, but writing an introduction can be the most difficult step in completing a draft. This section will provide tips and a step-by-step guide to writing an introduction that is clear, concise, and attention-grabbing.

In the introduction, you need to:

- present relevant background or contextual material
- define terms or concepts when necessary
- explain the focus of the paper and your specific purpose
- reveal your plan of organization

Your introduction should begin with “a clear statement of the context of the paper.”<sup>2</sup> If you are writing about a literary work, provide a very brief (1-2 sentence) description of what the work is and what it includes that relates to your thesis.

## What is a Thesis?

Your thesis statement is the most important part of your paper. No matter how well you write or how well you use and analyze evidence, your paper will not be successful unless it includes a thesis—a central argument that ties together all your sub points. As an interpretive argument about a text or an aspect of a text, it makes a reasonable but contestable claim about a text.

In other words, a thesis is an opinion about a text that can be supported with textual evidence. This section will offer tips for formulating a strong thesis statement.

**THESIS STATEMENT**

- A central argument that ties together all your sub-points
- Makes a reasonable but contestable claim about a text
- Supported with textual evidence

Continuing with the earlier example concerning climate change in Latin America, viable theses include:

- Climate change poses an existential threat to Latin American food security.
- The economic effects of climate change in Latin America are stimulating the illegal drug trade.
- Climate change constitutes a threat to population centers because it reduces natural water reservoirs.

## A Good Thesis Is...

- **Specific.** A thesis statement must be focused enough to be proven within the boundaries of the paper. Key words (nouns and verbs) should be specific, accurate, and indicative of the range of research, thrust of the argument or analysis, and the organization of supporting information. In the first stages of writing, theses are usually rough or ill-formed and are useful primarily as planning tools. A thesis statement or purpose statement will emerge as you think and write about a topic. The statement can be restricted or clarified and eventually crafted into an introduction.
- **Reflective of the Paper as Whole.** As you revise your paper, try to phrase your thesis so it matches the content and organization of your paper. A thesis statement makes a promise to the reader about **the scope, purpose, and direction** of the paper. It summarizes the conclusions that the writer has reached about the topic.
- **Assertive and Explanatory.** A good thesis makes an **argumentative assertion** about a topic; it identifies the **relationships between the pieces of evidence** that you are using to support your argument. A thesis statement does not simply announce a topic: it says something about the topic and predicts how the topic will be developed.

<b>NO</b>	<b>INSTEAD</b>
In this paper, I will discuss X.	X has made a significant impact on the teenage population due to its . . .

A thesis statement is generally located near the end of the introduction. Sometimes, though—especially in a long paper—the thesis will be expressed in several sentences or an entire paragraph.

## Choosing Sources

Evaluating and using sources can be a difficult task. How do you pick and choose? How do you take information from your sources and create your own original writing? The following are some useful tips to help you make the most of your sources:

- **Consider its relevance.** Is the source pertinent to your topic? Will it be useful in supporting your argument? To save time, do some pre-reading of books you may use in your research. Skim through articles and assess their usefulness.
- **Evaluate the author.** Is the author qualified to speak on the subject? Does the author have a particular bias? Pay attention to whether the author is supporting or challenging your own ideas.
- **Evaluate the source.** Consider if the publication has a good reputation in its field, or if it is unknown. It is best to research the source. That way, you can be certain it is an authority. Consider the date of the publication. Is it recent? If it is a web page, treat it in the same way as you would any other publication and research its reputation. As a general rule, blogs are not valid sources.
- **Consider the audience.** Is the author writing to a particular audience? Does the author assume a level of knowledge from his audience?
- **Consider the arguments and evidence.** What are the points the author is trying to make and what evidence is given to support each point?

## Organizing Sources

It is important to group, sequence and document information as you conduct your research. Try the following tips to stay organized:

- **Create a list of your sources.** Make sure you are keeping clear records of your sources. Get all the information you will need to cite the source accurately.
- **Take careful notes on the source.** Take down enough information so that you remember the main arguments of the source.
- **Organize material according to its relative importance.**
- **Choose short quotations.** Limit the use of your quotations. Quotations serve the paper well when the author being quoted says it best! Always try to rephrase in your own words or paraphrase to minimize usage. You are the author of the paper; your words matter!

# Citing Sources

Most academic writing projects require you to gather, evaluate, and use the work of others. If you learn a few basic rules, you can quickly format your researched using the style required for your course.

## Bibliography and Works Cited

A Bibliography or Works Cited page is a list of source publications on a particular topic. A scholarly publication such as a journal article usually lists source publications used by the author at the end of the article.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WORKS CITED**

A list of source publications on a particular topic

Instructors require a bibliography or list of references for legal, ethical, and practical reasons. Using another author's work without giving proper credit may violate copyright laws, and using another author's work without giving proper credit constitutes plagiarism.

## Style Manuals<sup>3</sup>

Published guides called style manuals can show you how to cite your sources completely and consistently. While some manuals are specific to particular disciplines, others are more general. A particular style may be required by your instructor.

### **STYLE MANUALS**

Handbooks that demonstrate how to cite sources completely and consistently

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) is one of the most widely used style guides in the United States. It is the preferred editorial method of the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. Available online and in hard copy, CMS provides features such as a citation guide, editing process, and grammar rules.

Here are other common styles:

- **APA** (American Psychological Association) is used primarily by scholars in the social sciences.
- **APSA** (American Political Science Association), as the name suggests, is often used by political scientists.
- **CSE** (Council of Science Editors) is often used to cite scientific material.
- **MLA** (Modern Language Association) is used by scholars in the humanities. This style involves using parenthetical citations in the text of your paper

Be consistent. Following a style consistently and carefully throughout your bibliography ensures that you include all the necessary information to identify your sources. It also makes it easy for your reader (and yourself) to recognize and locate the same sources for

further research.

It is often appropriate for different academic fields to use different styles. For example, since the humanities and the medical field use different kinds of information in different ways, they also use different citation styles.

### **When to Cite?**

By definition, writing an analytical paper involves analyzing source materials to make an argument. However, while you are free to quote and describe these source materials (original texts, literary criticisms, etc.) in your paper, you must give credit to the author of these materials when you use their words or ideas to further your argument. This involves using citations throughout your paper and including a Bibliography or Works Cited page with your drafts.

- **Quotations.** If you use an author's specific word or words, you must place those words within quotation marks and credit the source.
- **Information and Ideas.** Even if you use your own words, if you obtained the information or ideas you are presenting from a source, you must document the source.

Information: If a piece of information isn't common knowledge (see next bullet point), you need to provide a source.

Ideas: An author's ideas may include not only points made and conclusions drawn, but, for instance, a specific method or theory, the arrangement of material, or a list of steps in a process or characteristics of a medical condition. If a source provided any of these, you need to acknowledge the source.

- **Common Knowledge.** You do not need to cite a source for material considered common knowledge.

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

Field-specific common knowledge is "common" only within a particular field or specialty. It may include facts, theories, or methods that are familiar to readers within that discipline. You must be sure that this information is so widely known within that field that it will be shared by your readers.

If in doubt, be cautious and cite the source. And in the case of both general and field-specific common knowledge, if you use the exact words of the reference source, you must use quotation marks and credit the source.

## Plagiarism

Simply phrased, plagiarism involves using another person's intellectual property—words, ideas, or art—without giving proper credit to that individual.<sup>4</sup>

Plagiarism is a form of theft that can range in scope from overt and intentional (e.g. putting your name on a paper you did not write or copying large sections of a book without crediting the author) to subtle and sometimes even accidental (e.g. citing a source incorrectly or failing to cite a paraphrased sentence).

Plagiarism can ruin your credibility as a writer and can result in serious consequences.<sup>5</sup>

### PLAGIARISM

using another person's intellectual property—words, ideas, or art—without giving proper credit to that individual

## Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

Follow these simple steps to avoid unintentionally plagiarizing:

1. **Use quotation marks** when you are quoting the exact words of a source.
2. **Cite the source immediately** after using a direct quote or paraphrase.
3. **Err on the side of caution** and use a citation if you are not sure whether or not your idea is original. Think carefully about which ideas are your own and which come from outside sources.
4. **Attribute quotes and ideas to the correct sources**; if you need to, take separate notes on each book or article you use in your paper so it is easier to match sources with the ideas they contain.
5. **Double-check your in-text citations as well as your Works Cited page** to make sure that the information is correct and complete.
6. **Ask your professor for advice** before turning in your paper if you are unsure whether or not you are utilizing and citing sources correctly.

# Using Sources

## Paraphrasing vs. Quoting

When you paraphrase, you capture the sense of a statement in your own words. If you are summarizing or paraphrasing, make sure that the author's ideas are written in your own words. Do not try to mix the author's wording with your own. Capture the main points and put them into your own words and sentence structures.

**PARAPHRASING**  
capturing the essence of  
a statement from the  
text in your own words

You should use a paraphrase:

- To make a complicated discussion more concise for your reader
- If a section of text is relevant to your paper only because its content relates to your topic or to the plot of the work you are examining

Quotations can make a paper interesting and reveal a lot about your subject, but they should be used sparingly. A few well-chosen quotes enliven your paper. Big blocks of quotation or excessive quoting can kill it. Before quoting, try to express the idea in your own words to see if it sounds better.<sup>6</sup> Use direct quotations only if you have a good reason. Most of your paper should be in your own words. Here are some reasons you might use quotations:

- To show that an authority supports your point
- To present a position or argument upon which to critique or comment
- To include especially moving or historically significant language
- To present a particularly well-stated passage whose meaning would be lost or changed if paraphrased or summarized
- When word choice is relevant<sup>7</sup>

## Using Quotations

Incorporating textual evidence into your paper can be a challenge. An appropriate quote can demonstrate the validity of your argument and help your paper progress, but quotes can also weigh your paper down if they are overused or unnecessary.

## Integrating Quotations

One of your jobs as a writer is to guide your reader through your text. Don't just drop quotations into your paper and leave it to the reader to make connections. Also,

remember that quotes cannot stand on their own as a sentence.<sup>8</sup> The following components can help you integrate quotations smoothly into your paper:

- Resist the temptation to let a quote open or end your paragraph. Relying on someone else’s words to make your point for you reduces your credibility.
- **Signal:** Use signal phrases to introduce quotes.
  - “Signal” the reader when your ideas end and someone else’s ideas begin
  - You can signal that a quotation is coming by mentioning the author’s name, who is speaking, perhaps why you are “letting them speak,” and/or a reference to the work. Verbs such as “argues,” “remarks” or “charges” are useful for identifying the author or the person speaking.
- **Assertion:** Include an assertion that indicates the relationship of the quotation to your text. Surround the quotation with material that explains why it is there and how we should use it.
- **Connection:** As we saw with transition words, connections can help the passage flow more smoothly.
- **Explanation:** Follow up any quote with some explanation or analysis of how the quote supports or illustrates your point.

### Using Paraphrases

The methods below are not only a way to create a paraphrase but also a way to understand a difficult text. You may need to go through this process several times to create a satisfactory paraphrase.

### Paraphrasing Tips

- **Understand the source.** When reading a passage, try first to understand it as a whole, rather than pausing to write down specific ideas or phrases. Read the text you want to paraphrase several times—until you feel that you understand it and can use your own words to restate it to someone else.
- **Paraphrase selectively.** You usually don’t need to paraphrase an entire passage; instead, choose and summarize the material that helps you make a point in your paper.
- **Think of what “your own words” would be** if you were telling someone who’s unfamiliar with your subject (your mother, your brother, a friend) what the original source said.

- **Remember that you can use direct quotations** of phrases from the original within your paraphrase; you don't need to change or put quotation marks around shared language.

### Formatting Quotations

When you use a quote, you are taking someone else's exact words. That means you should put quotation marks around any words which aren't your own, including phrases or fancy terms that your subject uses.

Incorporate short direct prose quotations into the text of your paper and enclose them in double quotation marks, as in the examples above. Begin longer quotations (for instance, 4 lines or more) on a new line and indent the entire quotation, with no quotation marks at beginning or end. Rules about the minimum length of block quotations, how many spaces to indent, and whether to single- or double-space extended quotations vary with different documentation styles; check the guidelines for the style you're using.

### Punctuation with Quotations

**1. Parenthetical citations.** With short quotations, place citations outside of closing quotation marks, followed by sentence punctuation (period, question mark, comma, semi-colon, colon):

Menand (2002) characterizes language as “a social weapon” (p. 115).

With block quotations, check the guidelines for the documentation system you are using.

**2. Commas and periods.** Place inside closing quotation marks when no parenthetical citation follows:

Hertzberg (2002) notes that “treating the Constitution as imperfect is not new,” but because of Dahl's credentials, his “apostasy merits attention” (p. 85).<sup>9</sup>

**3. Semi-colons and colons.** Place outside of closing quotation marks (or after a parenthetical citation).

**4. Question marks and exclamation points.** Place inside closing quotation marks if the quotation is a question/exclamation. Note that a period still follows the closing parenthesis:

Menand (2001) acknowledges that H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* is “a classic of the language,” but he asks, “Is it a dead classic?” (p. 114).<sup>10</sup>

Place outside of closing quotation marks if the entire sentence containing the quotation is a question or exclamation:

How many students actually read the guide to find out what is meant by “academic misconduct”?

**5. Quotations within quotations.** Use single quotation marks for the embedded quotation:

According to Hertzberg (2002), Dahl gives the U. S. Constitution “bad marks in ‘democratic fairness’ and ‘encouraging consensus’” (p. 90).<sup>11</sup>

The phrases “democratic fairness” and “encouraging consensus” are already in quotation marks in Dahl’s sentence.

## Writing the Body

- Use your outline and prospectus as flexible guides.
- Build your essay around points you want to make. In other words, don't let your sources organize your paper.
- Integrate your sources into your discussion.
- Summarize, analyze, explain and evaluate published work rather than merely reporting it.
- Move from generalization to varying levels of detail back to generalization.

### Using Transitions<sup>12</sup>

At this point in the writing process, you should have a main argument, plenty of supporting textual evidence, and a strategy for organizing your paper. These are all positive things, but even organized papers with great ideas can be unclear or unconvincing if their individual paragraphs seem choppy and unconnected. This section will outline some strategies for transitioning between paragraphs and making your paper flow more smoothly.

Transition words are words or phrases used in the topic sentence of a paragraph that give the reader clues about the paragraph logically relates to the rest of the paper. Transition words can also reveal different types of logical relationships.<sup>13</sup>

**TRANSITIONS**  
words or phrases used in the topic sentence of a paragraph that give the reader clues about the paragraph

FOR EXAMPLE, IF	START THE TOPIC SENTENCE OF THE PARAGRAPH WITH
You are beginning a paragraph that continues the argument of the previous paragraph or makes a similar point	Likewise... In addition... Similarly... Furthermore... Also... Moreover...
You are beginning a paragraph that contradicts or qualifies the previous paragraph	Although... Yet... But... On the one hand... On the other hand... However...
You want to show cause	Because/Since [idea from previous paragraph], [idea for new paragraph].

	Example: “Because the administration cut funding, the program’s effectiveness is diminished.”
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### **Using Keywords**

When you wrote your introductory paragraph, you utilized certain keywords in articulating your thesis statement. One way to transition smoothly between paragraphs is to start each paragraph with a topic sentence containing the keywords used in your thesis.<sup>14</sup> Using the same keywords throughout the paper can strengthen its coherence by reminding the reader that each of your points relates back to your main argument.

Many people feel uncomfortable with the idea of repeating the same words over and over again in their paper. While repeating the same words over and over can sound awkward, using the same words throughout the course of a paper makes it easier to follow the argument. On a side note, when using a thesaurus, make sure that your new word does not have a different connotation from the original keyword.<sup>15</sup>

# Crafting Clear Sentences

How to Write Clear, Concise, and Direct Sentences

**1. Use the active voice** unless you have a reason not to. At the heart of every good sentence is a strong, precise verb. The opposite is true as well; at the core of most confusing, awkward, or wordy sentences lays a weak verb.

Passive	Active
It is believed by the candidate that a ceiling must be placed on the budget by Congress.	The candidate believes that Congress must place a ceiling on the budget.
It was earlier demonstrated that heart attacks can be caused by high stress.	Brown earlier showed that high stress can cause heart attacks.
Her wallet was discovered missing by the student.	She discovered her wallet was missing.

There are sometimes good reasons to use the passive voice:

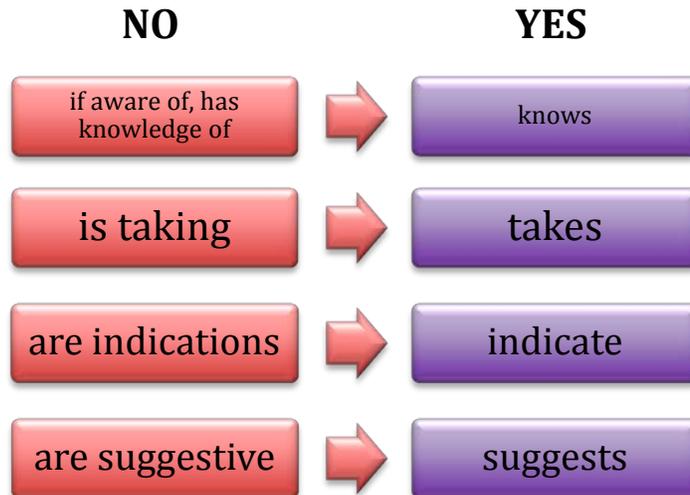
- To emphasize the action rather than the actor.  
Example: After long debate, the proposal was endorsed by the long-range planning committee.
- To keep the subject and focus consistent throughout a passage.  
Example: The data processing department recently presented what proved to be a controversial proposal to expand its staff. After long debate, the proposal was endorsed by...
- To be tactful by not naming the actor.  
Example: The procedures were somehow misinterpreted.
- To describe a condition in which the actor is unknown or unimportant.  
Example: Every year, thousands of people are diagnosed as having cancer.
- To create an authoritative tone.  
Example: Visitors are not allowed after 9:00 p.m.

**2. Put the action of the sentence in the verb.** DO NOT bury it in a noun or blur it across the entire sentence. Watch out, especially, for nominalizations (verbs that have been made into nouns by the addition of “-tion”).

NO	YES
An <b>evaluation</b> of the procedures needs to be done.	The procedures need to be evaluated. <i>or</i> We need to evaluate the procedures.
The stability and quality of our financial performance will be	We will improve our financial performance not only by executing our

developed through the profitable execution of our existing business, as well as the acquisition or development of new businesses.	existing business more profitably but by acquiring or developing new businesses.
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**3. Reduce wordy verbs.**



**4. Use expletive constructions (“It is,” “There is,” “There are”) sparingly.**

NO	YES
It was her last argument that finally persuaded me.	Her last argument finally persuaded me.
There are likely to be many researchers raising questions about this methodological approach.	Many researchers are likely to raise questions about this methodological approach.

**5. Try to avoid using vague, all-purpose nouns (“factor,” “aspect,” “area,” “situation,” “consideration,” “degree,” “case”...), which often lead to wordiness.**

NO	YES
Consumer demand is rising <u>in the area of</u> services.	Consumers are demanding more services.
He is pleased with <u>the degree to which</u> progress is being made.	He is pleased with the recent progress.

**6. Do not write strings of nouns unless your readers are familiar with your terminology.**

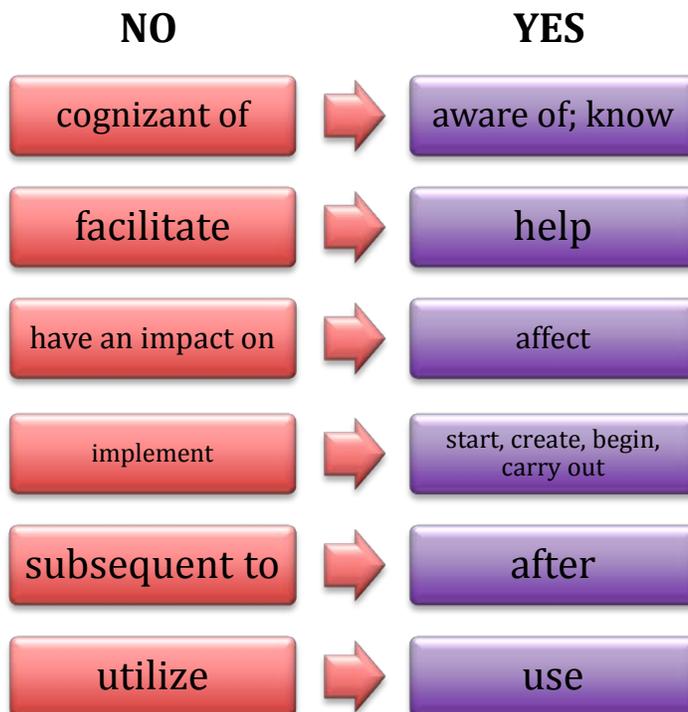
NO	YES
program implementation process evaluation	An initiative to evaluate programs

conflict mitigation associate linkage implementation	An effort to resolve conflicts
politico-military peace and understanding forum associates	Individuals working to improve relations between the military and the government

**7. Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases.**

NO	YES
The opinion of the working group	The working group's opinion
The obvious effect of such a range of reference is to assure the audience of the author's range of learning and intellect.	The author's competence reassures the audience.

**8. Avoid unnecessarily inflated words.**



**9. Shorten wordy phrases.**

NO	YES
the reason for for the reason that due to the fact that owing to the fact that	because, since, why
considering the fact that	this is why

on the grounds that	
despite the fact that regardless of the fact that	although, even though
in the event that if it should transpire/happen that under circumstances in which	if

**10. Go from old to new information.**

<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
The student reported her wallet missing, having gone to the Jacobs Fitness Center, and then she returned to her dorm and discovered her purse was empty.	After she left the Jacobs Fitness Center and returned to her dorm, the student discovered her purse was empty and reported her wallet missing.

**11. Avoid interrupting the main point of the sentence.**

<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
Campus crimes, because of the growing popularity of cell phones and PDAs, can even involve theft of personal information.	Because of the growing popularity of cell phones and PDAs, campus crimes can even involve theft of personal information.

**12. Avoid multiple negatives.**

<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
She did not discover it was missing until she was not at the Fitness Center, so she did not remember when she had last seen the wallet.	She did not remember when she had last seen the wallet because she only discovered it was missing after she had left the Fitness Center.

**13. Avoid unclear pronoun references.**

<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
Campus officers talked to several students about the incident, but they didn't have any new information and could not pin down the details. This made it difficult to write a good report.	Campus officers talked to several students about the incident, but the students didn't have any new information and could not pin down the details. The lack of information made it difficult to write a good report.

**14. Avoid dangling modifiers.**

<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>
Wandering aimlessly around campus,	Wandering aimlessly around campus,

his books got lost somehow.	he lost his books.
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## Writing the Conclusion

“Finish strong” is familiar advice to many people, and it is relevant advice when it comes to writing analytical papers. The strength of your concluding paragraph will affect the overall impact of your paper and the ability of your reader to connect with your topic. Here is some advice for writing an effective conclusion:

- If the argument or point of your paper is complex, you may need to summarize the argument for your reader.
- If prior to your conclusion you have not yet explained the significance of your findings or if you are proceeding inductively, use the end of your paper to add your points up, to explain their significance.
- Move from a detailed to a general level of consideration that returns the topic to the context provided by the introduction.
- Perhaps suggest what about this topic needs further research.

### Make It Relevant

Many students think of a concluding paragraph as one that summarizes the thesis statement and main ideas of a paper;<sup>16</sup> however, the conclusion should not only reinforce that you have successfully posed an argument. Whereas your introductory paragraph starts broad and then funnels down to your thesis...the concluding paragraph establishes what you've proved in the paper and then broadens out the meaning of what you've established in the course of your analysis.<sup>17</sup>

# Revising

Congratulations! You have completed your first draft and revised it to improve the content of the paper. At this point in the writing process, many students decide to hand in their papers without a second glance. Resist the urge to do this. Even if your latest draft contains brilliant, well-organized arguments, it might still have some awkward sentences or spelling and grammatical errors. Such mistakes will lower your grade, even if the information presented in your paper is solid. In order to maximize your grade and write a paper you are proud of, consider the suggestions for revising and editing your paper.

## Starting the Revision Process with “Big Picture” Questions

The first step to revising your writing is to ask yourself “big picture” questions about your draft. After all, there’s no sense tinkering with paragraphs or sentences if you haven’t accomplished what you want to with your paper, and there’s no sense rearranging information if the information itself isn’t valid to your argument.<sup>18</sup>

- Does your paper have a central argument? If yes, is the argument complex and contestable enough that it allows your paper to move beyond mere description?
  - If your answer to either of these questions was, “no,” you have probably written a descriptive paper instead of an analytical one. Refer to the section on crafting a thesis for tips on creating an argument to sustain your paper.
- Is the argument clearly stated and easily identifiable to readers? Does your paper explain why your topic matters?
  - If either of these answers was, “no,” consider revising your introductory or concluding paragraphs.
- Does your argument progress logically? Can your reader easily comprehend the logic behind your paper’s organization?
  - If you are uncertain about whether or not your paper is well-organized, make a “reverse outline”<sup>19</sup> that lists the main ideas of each of the paragraphs in the body of your paper. This can help you to verify that each of your paragraphs has a single main idea (paragraphs containing more than one idea should be divided) and that the content of your paper is arranged in a way that flows well.
  - If you feel confident that your paper is well-organized, but want to make your organizational structure easier for readers to follow, review the section on using transitions.

## Precision Revising

## Introduction

- Once you feel comfortable with the “big picture” of your paper, ask questions about your individual paragraphs.
- Does your introduction contain your thesis statement?
- Does it frame your paper by setting a tone and a framework for your argument?
- Does it catch the reader’s attention?

## Body Paragraphs

- Does the idea contained in each paragraph support your paper’s main argument? If so, will the connection between each paragraph and your overall argument be apparent to your readers?
- Do your paragraphs contain textual evidence? If yes, do you make an analytical argument about the evidence?
- Is each sentence logically connected to the ones preceding and following it?

## Conclusion

- Does your final paragraph pull the paper together in a way that does not merely repeat or rehash what you have already argued?
- Does your conclusion make it clear to the reader why your topic matters?

# Editing

## Editing for Grammar

By this point, you are finished composing and revising your essay. You have written an introduction and conclusion, incorporated transitions, and made use of textual evidence to support your argument. Still, you are not yet finished with your first draft. You still need to comb through what you've written to make sure that you don't have any grammar mistakes. Common grammar mistakes not only get in the way of your reader's ability to understand your argument, but they can also undermine your credibility in the eyes of the reader.

**1. Sentence Fragments.** A complete sentence must express a complete thought. Sometimes fragments slip in between closely related thoughts. Watch out for words that make sentences incomplete.<sup>20</sup>

NO	YES
We had a great party. All the food you could eat.	We had a great party with all the food you could eat.
She got soaking wet. Having given her raincoat to Emily.	She got soaking wet, having given her raincoat to Emily.
Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.	Tests of the Shroud of Turin have produced some curious findings. For example, the cloth contains the pollen of forty-eight plants native to Europe and the Middle East.
Scientists report no human deaths due to excessive caffeine consumption. Although caffeine does cause convulsions and death in certain animals.	Scientists report no human deaths due to excessive caffeine consumption, although caffeine does cause convulsions and death in certain animals.

**2. Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences.** Whenever complete thoughts are joined in one sentence, they must have a comma and/or conjunction. When writers violate this rule, they create a comma splice (no conjunction) or a “fused” sentence (no comma). It is a common mistake to put in punctuation mentally then forget to type it. Look for commas and double-check to ensure they are properly used.

NO	YES
The clock ticked down to zero the gun sounded, the game was over.	The clock ticked down to zero, the gun sounded, and the game was over.
We always use commas correctly avoid run-on sentences.	We always use commas correctly to avoid run-on sentences.

**3. Ineffective Passive.** In the passive voice, the subject does nothing; instead, it has something done *to* it. To locate the passive, look for some form of the verb “to be” (“is,”

“am,” “were,” etc.) as a helping verb. Then, take out the “helping verb.” Look for the telltale helping verb, then ask “by whom?”

NO	YES
Baskets were shot by the players.	The players shot baskets
Milk should be drunk by children three times a day.	Children should drink milk three times a day
Mistakes were made.	We made mistakes.

These passive constructions are not always “wrong,” but are often unnecessarily awkward and usually lead to wordiness—not to mention that **impersonal** effect. That’s why they are useful in documents that need to seem “objective”—e.g. scientific or business reports.

**4. Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers.** When a phrase or clause has no word to modify in the sentence—or the word it modifies is elsewhere in the sentence—we say it is misplaced or dangling. To resolve this issue, look for phrases that have participial (-ing) endings and insert the subject that is doing the action.

NO	YES
When taking hurdles, the helmet must have a chinstrap. (The helmet is taking the hurdles!)	When taking the hurdles, runners must have a chinstrap on their helmets
When writing a proposal, an original task is set for research. (Who is writing a proposal?)	When writing a proposal, a scholar sets an original task for research.

When modifying phrases are stuck in the sentence in such a way that you can’t tell which noun they modify, readers may not be able to make sense of the sentence. To solve this, look out for phrases that have an “understood” subject and place modifiers near the words they describe; be sure the modified words actually appear in the sentence.

NO	YES
The woman in the garden shot her lover. (What does “in the garden” tell—where she is now or where she shot her lover?)	She shot her lover in the garden.
Many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military personnel are buried every day from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.	Every day from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., many tourists visit Arlington National Cemetery, where veterans and military personnel are buried.

**5. Sentence Sprawl.** Too many equally weighted phrases and clauses produce tiresome sentences. There are no grammatical errors here, but the sprawling sentence does not communicate clearly and concisely.

NO	YES
The hearing was planned for Monday, December 2, but not all of the witnesses could be available, so it was rescheduled for the following Friday.	The hearing, which had been planned for Monday, December 2, was rescheduled for the following so that all witnesses would be able to attend.

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

NO	YES
The candidate’s goals include winning the election, a health program, and education.	The candidate’s goals include winning the election, enacting a national health program, and improving the educational system.
Some critics are not so much opposed to capital punishment as postponing it for so long.	Some critics are not so much opposed to sentencing convicts to capital punishment as they are to postponing executions for so long.

**7. Unclear Pronoun Reference.** Pronouns must clearly refer to definite referents (nouns). Use “it”, “they”, “that”, “these”, “those”, and “which” carefully to prevent confusion.

NO	YES
Einstein was a brilliant mathematician. This is how he was able to explain the workings of the universe.	Einstein, who was a brilliant mathematician, used his quantitative ability to explain the workings of universe.
Because Senator Martin is less interested in the environment than in economic development, she sometimes neglects it.	Because of her interest in economic development, Senator Martin sometimes neglects the environment.

**8. Pronoun Agreement.** Be sure that each pronoun agrees in number (singular or plural) and point of view (first, second or third person) with the subject to which it refers.<sup>21</sup>

NO	YES
When a candidate runs for office, they must expect to have their personal life scrutinized.	When candidates run for office, they must expect to have their personal lives scrutinized.
According to tenets of the “new urbanism,” everyone needs to consider the relationship of their house to the surrounding community.	According to tenets of the “new urbanism,” everyone needs to consider the relationship of his or her house to the surrounding community.

**9. Incorrect Pronoun Case.** Determine whether the pronoun is being used as a subject,

object, or possessive in the sentence, and select the pronoun form to match.

NO	YES
Castro’s communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between he and President Kennedy.	Castro’s communist principles inevitably led to an ideological conflict between him and President Kennedy.
Because strict constructionists recommend fidelity to the Constitution as written, no one objects more than them to judicial reinterpretation.	Because strict constructionists recommend fidelity to the Constitution as written, no one objects more than they [object] to judicial reinterpretation.

**10. Omitted Commas.** Use commas to signal nonrestrictive or nonessential material to prevent confusion, and to indicate relationships among ideas and sentence parts.

NO	YES
When it comes to eating people differ in their tastes.	When it comes to eating, people differ in their tastes.
The Huns who were Mongolian invaded Gaul in 451.	The Huns, who were Mongolian, invaded Gaul in 451.

“Who were Mongolian” adds information but does not change the core meaning of the sentence because Huns were a Mongolian people; it is therefore nonrestrictive or nonessential and should be set apart with commas.

**11. Superfluous Commas.** Unnecessary commas make sentences difficult to read.

NO	YES
Field trips are required, in several courses, such as, botany and geology.	Field trips are required in several courses, such as botany and geology.
The term “scientific illiteracy,” has become almost a cliché in educational circles.	The term “scientific illiteracy” has become almost a cliché in educational circles.

**12. Comma Splice.** A comma splice is where a comma is used to join two independent clauses which should be separated by a period. An independent clause can stand on its own as a sentence. It is incorrect to use a comma everywhere a reader would pause. Do not link two independent clauses with a comma (unless you also use a coordinating conjunction and, or, but, for, nor, so yet). Instead, use a period or semicolon. Alternatively, you could rewrite the sentence.

NO	YES
In 1952, Japan’s gross national product was one third that of France, by the late 1970s, it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.	In 1952, Japan’s gross national product was one third that of France. By the late 1970s, it was larger than the GNPs of France and Britain combined.
Diseased coronary arteries are often	Diseased coronary arteries are often

surgically bypassed, however half of all bypass grafts fail within ten years.	surgically bypassed; however, half of all bypass grafts fail within ten years.
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**13. Apostrophe Errors.** Apostrophes indicate possessives and contractions but not plurals. Some students confuse singular possessive and plural nouns. Singular possessive nouns always take an apostrophe, with few exceptions, and plural nouns never take an apostrophe. Omitting an apostrophe or adding one where it does not belong makes the sentence unclear.

- Possessives: its, your, their, whose, etc.
  - Example: Perú is located on the west coast of South America. Its geography includes many different microclimes.
  - Example: Your idea is rather interesting.
  - Example: It's their turn to bat.
  - Example: Whose chair is this?
  
- Contractions: it's, you're, they're, who's, etc.
  - Example: It's time to leave.
    - "Its" is the possessive form of "it." "It's" is the contraction of "it is." They are not interchangeable.
  - Example: You're leaving already?
  - Example: Who's leaving?
  - Example: They're leaving early.

NO	YES
In the current conflict, <u>its</u> uncertain <u>who's</u> borders <u>their</u> contesting.	In the current conflict, <u>it's</u> uncertain <u>whose</u> borders <u>they're</u> contesting.
The <u>Aztecs ritual's</u> of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time.	The <u>Aztecs' rituals</u> of renewal increased in frequency over the course of time.

**14. Words Easily Confused.**

NO	YES
The recession had a negative <u>affect</u> on sales.	The recession had a negative <u>effect</u> on sales. <i>or</i> The recession <u>affected</u> sales negatively.

“Affect” is a verb. “Effect” is a noun.

NO	YES
The laboratory instructor choose not to offer detailed <u>advise</u> .	The laboratory instructor chose not to offer detailed <u>advice</u> .

“Advise” is a verb. “Advice” is a noun.

NO	YES
Do not <u>except</u> this position if you don't think you can handle it.	Do not <u>accept</u> this position if you don't think you can handle it.

“Accept” is a verb. “Except” is a preposition.

**15. Misuse and abuse of semicolons.** Semicolons are used to separate two related independent clauses or to separate items in a list that contains commas. Do not abuse semicolons by using them too often. They are best used sparingly.

### Editing for Clarity

The way you phrase an argument in your paper is as important as what you argue. The reader needs to be able to follow what you are saying easily. Therefore, it is important that your paper flows well. Try the following techniques to edit your paper for clarity:<sup>22</sup>

- **Read the paper out loud.** Do you stumble over certain sentences? If so, try to shorten or rephrase them to make them less clumsy. Often, sentences that are awkward or unclear have parallelism problems.
- Most word processing programs **count the number of words you use per sentence.** If your word processing program alerts you that a sentence is lengthy, think of ways you can edit the sentence to make it more direct.
- **Eliminate superfluous words** like “very,” “incredibly,” “always,” and “actual” using search functions in your word processing program.
- **Eliminate imprecise language.** Imprecise language includes nouns like “thing” and “stuff,” verbs like “get” and “do,” and adjectives like “very” and “really.” These can almost always be replaced with more specific, stronger words.
- **Clarify “this”(or “it”) to make the sentence more precise** if you see a place in your paper where you have used “this” to refer to a larger general concept.<sup>23</sup>

For example, you write a paragraph about how anti-Western sentiment has grown recently in East Asia. How should you start the next paragraph?

NO	YES
This could prove problematic for future diplomats.	This sentiment could decrease the likelihood of fruitful negotiations in the coming decade. <sup>24</sup>

- **Don't be afraid to delete** parts of your paper. Editing out content can actually enhance a paper by making it more streamlined and clear.<sup>25</sup>
- **Avoid colorless, generic and bland adjectives.** Instead, use specific adjectives that add meaning to the sentence.<sup>26</sup>
- **Avoid repetitious sentence structure.** Variety in sentence structure and length gives a rhythm to prose. Repetitious sentence structures and/or length make the prose choppy.<sup>27</sup>
- **Avoid lazy transitions/lack of transitions.** Transitions link paragraphs and even sentences together. Many different types of transitions and transitional phrases exist in order to provide the most accurate link.<sup>28</sup>
- **Avoid recurring use of a character's name when a pronoun would suffice.** When writing about a character, use the pronoun when the referent is clear in order to avoid choppy, repetitious sentence structures. An example is, "Bill is the protagonist of the work. Bill is a teenage boy. Bill's travels form the majority of the narrative. While Bill is on his journey, Bill meets many interesting characters." In this paragraph, after the first reference to "Bill," the pronoun "he" can replace each use of the name.<sup>29</sup>

### Editing for Spelling

Do not rely solely on your computer to check your spelling. Computers can be a helpful tool in detecting errors, but your spell check program cannot detect words spelled incorrectly for the context in which you are using them, so it is best to proofread your completed paper to make sure you used the words that you meant to use. For example, your computer will most likely indicate that "Bobby seas there read wagon" is correct, even if you meant to say, "Bobby sees their red wagon."

This task proves often proves difficult because many writers are so absorbed in their papers that they read what they meant to say instead of what is actually written. To avoid this mistake:

- Try reading the paper backwards or using an index card with a small box cut out of the middle to isolate each word of the text.<sup>30</sup>
- Trade papers with a classmate.

This section contains only brief examples and explanations intended for you to use as reminders while you are editing your papers. To learn more:

- Consult the Additional Resources section of this writing guide
- Confer with your course instructor

- Reference a writing handbook

# Proofreading

## Distance Yourself

It is often difficult for writers to see flaws in their own work because they have a tendency to read what they meant to write instead of what they actually wrote.<sup>31</sup> To make editing your paper easier, try to distance yourself from your work. Set your aside for a day, or even an hour.<sup>32</sup> When you go to edit your paper the next day (or an hour later), you may be able to approach it as an impartial reader and spot flaws more easily.

## Before Proofreading

Proofreading means examining your text carefully line by line to find mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and spelling, as well as typographical errors. It is the last step in the writing process.

After you have revised your document for content, organization, wordiness, etc., set it aside for a while. Make a list of problems you often encounter in your writing that you know you should watch for.

## When Proofreading

- **Work from a printout.** Mistakes are much easier to see on paper than on a screen.
- **Read your paper out loud.** Be careful to read slowly and precisely what is on the page. It will help you hear mistakes you may not see when reading silently. Ask someone else to listen as you read—or even to read your paper back to you.
- **Trick your eye.** For example, try reading backwards starting at the last sentence. Cover the lines above and below the one you’re reading with paper to help you focus on a single line at a time.
- **Check separately** for mistakes that you make often.
- **Use a computer spell checker**, but don’t rely on it. The spell checker will not catch mistakes in words that sound alike such as to, too, and two, or certain typos, like “he” for “the.”
- **Use a highlighter** or a pen to mark errors on the “hard copy.” This will help you develop your eye for errors.

## Revising the Final Draft

- **Check overall organization:** logical flow of introduction, coherence and depth of discussion in body, effectiveness of conclusion.

- **Paragraph level concerns:** topic sentences, sequence of ideas within paragraphs, use of details to support generalizations, summary sentences where necessary, use of transitions within and between paragraphs.
- **Sentence level concerns:** sentence structure, word choices, punctuation, spelling.
- **Documentation:** consistent use of one system, citation of all material not considered common knowledge, appropriate use of endnotes or footnotes, accuracy of list of works cited.

## Glossary

**bibliography** or **works cited** – a list of source publications on a particular topic

**brainstorming** – trying to think up good ideas;<sup>33</sup> solving specific problems, amassing information, stimulating creative thinking and developing new ideas through unrestrained and spontaneous discussion<sup>34</sup>

**free writing** – writing down your thoughts on a topic without structure or proofreading

**paraphrasing** – capturing the essence of a statement from the text in your own words

**plagiarism** – using another person’s intellectual property—words, ideas, or art—without giving proper credit to that individual<sup>35</sup>

**style manuals** – handbooks that show how to cite sources completely and consistently; some are specific to particular disciplines. Examples include the Chicago Manual of Style and the Modern Language Association, or MLA

**thesis** or **thesis statement** (plural: theses) – a central argument that ties together all of your sub-points and makes a reasonable but contestable claim about a text; an opinion about a text that can be supported with textual evidence

**topic** – the subject about which you will write

**transitions** – words or phrases used in the topic sentence of a paragraph that give the reader clues about the paragraph

## **Additional Resources**

### **Citing Sources**

“Documentation,” The Writer’s Handbook: Documentation Styles, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Documentation.html>.

“Plagiarism and Referencing,” Presentation, Student Development Services, The University of Western Ontario. <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?grad>.

### **Using Sources**

“Quoting and Paraphrasing,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>.

### **Crafting Clear Sentences**

Chicago Manual of Style Online, The. <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

“Effective Writing at the Graduate Level: Academic Writing Style,” Presentation, Student Development Services, The University of Western Ontario.

<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?grad>.

“Graduate Writing Resources,” The University of Western Ontario,

<http://www.sds.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?gradhandouts>.

Purdue University Online Writing Lab. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Strunk, William and E. B. White. *Elements of Style* (1918, 1999).

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

### **Revising, Editing and Proofreading**

“The Writing Process: Revising, Editing and Proofreading,” Presentation, Student Development Services, The University of Western Ontario,

<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/index.html?grad>.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the questions in this section were drawn from “Writing a Prospectus,” University of Florida Writing Program, <http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/shegeman/prospectusguide.htm>. Accessed 26 September 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See “Using Transitions,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/transitions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See “University Libraries,” University of Minnesota. <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu>. Accessed 26 September 2013. More details about different writing styles can be found at “About Documentation Styles,” The Writer’s Handbook. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012).

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocGeneral.html>. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica definition: “the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one’s own.” plagiarism. Dictionary.com. © *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.*. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plagiarism> (accessed: October 01, 2013).

Random House Dictionary definition: “using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author’s work as one’s own, as by not crediting the original author” plagiarism. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plagiarism> (accessed: October 01, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> See “Avoiding Plagiarism,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012). <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/plagiarism.html>. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>6</sup> See “Using Sources: Quote vs. Paraphrase,” American University Writing Center, <http://www.american.edu/cas/writing/resources.cfm>. Accessed 11 October 2013.

<sup>7</sup> See “Quoting v. Paraphrasing,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/quoting.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>8</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>9</sup> “How to Quote a Source,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012). [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_quoting.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html). Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>10</sup> “How to Quote a Source,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012). [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_quoting.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html). Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>11</sup> “How to Quote a Source,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012). [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_quoting.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_quoting.html). Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Material from here to the end of the “Writing the Body” section is taken directly from “Using Transitions,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/transitions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>13</sup> See “Using Transitions,” George Mason University Department of English, <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/transitions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>14</sup> See “Using Transitions,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/transitions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>15</sup> See “Using Transitions,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/transitions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>16</sup> See “Writing Your Conclusion,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/conclusion.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>17</sup> See “Writing Your Conclusion,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/conclusion.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>18</sup> See “Asking Questions About Your Draft,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/questions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>19</sup> See “Asking Questions About Your Draft,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/questions.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>20</sup> See “Sentence Fragments,” The Writer’s Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism. (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012). [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CommonErrors\\_Frag.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CommonErrors_Frag.html). Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>21</sup> See “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>22</sup> See “Proofreading,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/proof.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

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<sup>23</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Note: This is an original example.

<sup>25</sup> See “Asking Questions About Your Draft,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide.

<sup>26</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>27</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>28</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>29</sup> “Avoiding Common Grammar Mistakes,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide. <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/grammar.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>30</sup> See “Proofreading,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide.

<sup>31</sup> See “Proofreading,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide.

<sup>32</sup> See “Proofreading,” George Mason University Department of English Writing Guide.

<http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/proof.html>. Accessed 24 September 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Definition drawn from Dictionary.com. *Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions*. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/brainstorm> (accessed: September 24, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Definition drawn from Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/brainstorming> (accessed: September 24, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica definition: “the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one’s own.” Definition drawn from Dictionary.com. *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.*. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plagiarism> (accessed: October 01, 2013). Random House Dictionary definition: “using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author’s work as one’s own, as by not crediting the original author” plagiarism. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plagiarism> (accessed: October 01, 2013).