

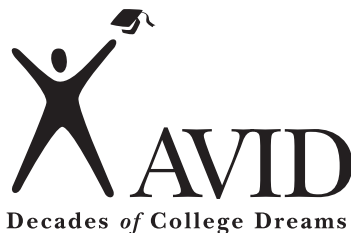
# HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

## *Student Guide*

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“The AVID program provides students with powerful instruction and support networks to help them be successful. Within our district we’ve found that students who participate in the AVID program are eager and prepared to enter rigorous coursework while in high school.”

—Dr. Eric J. Smith, Superintendent of Maryland’s  
Anne Arundel County Public Schools

## Using Learning Logs

**T**o get the most out of your classes, you should write about what you did, what you learned, and what questions you still have about the topic. This type of writing is an excellent way to prepare for exams and papers because you use writing to discover and clarify ideas, and you “uncover” what you don’t know as you try to articulate your learning.

For classes where you can’t take notes easily, complete a learning log as soon as possible after class. This will help you document what you got from class and how you are making sense of what you did in class.

### Focusing Your Learning Log—Selecting A Purpose

After a class activity, lecture, or event, make conscious decisions about the focus of your learning log. It is possible that you will need to select several focus areas to thoroughly write about a given class. Be sure to organize and label your log in a way that makes it an effective learning tool.

*If you want to **recap your learning**, try some of these prompts:*

- What did I learn in class today? How did I learn it?
- What was especially interesting about class today? Why?
- What do I now know about this topic that I didn’t know before class?
- An important activity I was involved in today was... and it affected my learning by...
- By taking today’s test, I learned...

*If you are feeling **confident** with the content, try some of these prompts:*

- What questions **did I have** that were answered today?
- How would I explain to someone else how to do what I learned to do today?
- What steps would I use to teach what I learned to a group of my peers?
- In what other ways can I demonstrate my understanding of this topic (pictures, diagrams, etc.)?
- What do I wonder about this topic now that I understand it better? How could I find out the answers?

*If you are feeling **confused or need clarification**, try some of these prompts:*

- What confuses me about this topic?
- What questions do I have about this topic? How will I find answers?
- Something I’m still confused about is... because...
- One thing I’d like to know (or think) more about is... because...
- I think my teacher had us do... because...

*If you are feeling **inspired** or want to **validate** your learning, try these prompts:*

- What surprised me about this material? Why?
- Why is it important that I know this information? How can I use it?
- What I learned today will help me because...
- The most important idea I got from the discussion was... and I can use it to...
- Today's learning changed my belief that... I now understand...
- Today's learning clarified my misconception that... My new knowledge reveals that...

*If you want to **extend or apply your learning**, try these prompts:*

- What do I want to learn more about? How will I do this?
- How does this material connect to ideas or information I already know?
- I can relate what I learned today and what I learned in another class by...
- The video I watched related to the course in the following way...

*If you want to **examine group and discussion interaction**, try these prompts:*

- In what ways did I participate in the discussion today? How can I improve for the next discussion?
- How can I encourage other students to participate more in our next discussion?
- How did I work with my group today? How can I improve next time?
- What was challenging about working in my group today? How can I deal with this challenge?



# The Cornell Notetaking System

<b><i>What are the advantages?</i></b>	<b>Three Advantages:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a method for mastering information, not just recording facts.</li> <li>2. It is efficient.</li> <li>3. Each step prepares the way for the next part of the learning process.</li> </ol>
<b><i>What materials are needed?</i></b>	<b>Materials:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Loose-leaf paper to be kept in a binder.</li> <li>2. 2½ inch column drawn at left side of each page to be used for questions or summary statements.</li> </ol>
<b><i>How should notes be recorded?</i></b>	<b>During class, record notes on the right side of the paper:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Record notes in paragraphs, skipping lines to separate information logically.</li> <li>2. Don't force an outlining system, but do use any obvious numbering.</li> <li>3. Strive to get <i>main ideas</i> down. Facts, details, and examples are important, but they're meaningful only with concepts.</li> <li>4. Use abbreviations for extra writing and listening time.</li> <li>5. Use graphic organizers or pictures when they are helpful.</li> </ol>
<b><i>How should notes be refined?</i></b>	<b>After class, refine notes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write questions in the left column about the information on the right.</li> <li>2. Check or correct incomplete items such as loose dates, terms, and names; add details to notes that are too brief for recall months later.</li> <li>3. Read the notes and underline key words and phrases.</li> <li>4. Read the underlined words. In the left-hand column, write recall cues (key words and very brief phrases that will trigger ideas/facts on the right). <i>These are in addition to the questions.</i></li> <li>5. At the bottom of the page, write a reflective paragraph or summary of the notes.</li> <li>6. If possible, compare notes with a study buddy.</li> </ol>
<b><i>What are the ways to recite notes?</i></b>	<b>Recite notes three ways:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cover up the right side of page. Read the questions. Recite information as fully as possible. Uncover the sheet and verify information frequently. (<i>This is the single, most powerful learning tool!</i>).</li> <li>2. Reflect on the organization of all the lectures. Overlap notes and read recall cues from the left side. Study the progression of the information. This will stimulate categories, relationships, inferences, personal opinions/experiences. Record all of these insights! <b>REFLECTION = KEY TO MEMORY!!</b></li> <li>3. <b>Review</b> by reciting, reflecting, and reading insights.</li> </ol>
<b><i>What are the five steps of this system?</i></b>	<b>In this system, you:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Record</i> lectures in the main column.</li> <li>2. <i>Refine</i> lectures with questions, corrections, underlining, recall cues, graphics and pictures.</li> <li>3. <i>Recite</i> notes by covering main column and expanding on recall cues; then, verify.</li> <li>4. <i>Reflect</i> on the organization of lectures by studying all cues.</li> <li>5. <i>Review</i> by repeating steps 3 and 4.</li> </ol>

# Advice for Using the Cornell System

<p><b>Format for notes</b></p>	<p>Write the date, class, topic of notes, source of notes (e.g., lecture, book, film) and page number (for each page of notes) at the top of a piece of lined paper.</p> <p>Mark a wide left margin (approx. 1/3 of page).</p> <p>Consider the right column the place for specific information. While taking notes, write in this column.</p> <p>Consider the left column the place for study questions and main ideas.</p> <p>Use abbreviations.</p> <p>Paraphrase (put in your own words) to capture content but simplify writing.</p> <p>Use symbols (arrows, circles, underlining) or highlight important information, ideas/words that are unclear, relationships between ideas/information.</p> <p>Include graphics (e.g., diagrams, charts) when relevant.</p> <p>Skip a line between ideas.</p> <p>Within 24 hours of taking notes, develop your study questions and identify the main ideas for details recorded in the right column; write your study questions/main ideas in the left column. Write a summary at the end of the notes.</p>
<p><b>Taking Notes: Some Tips</b></p>	
<p><b>Be an active listener</b></p>	<p>Think about what is being said.</p> <p>Think about how what is being said relates to other points in the lecture and ideas from discussion/reading/other subjects.</p> <p>Ask questions.</p>
<p><b>Be aware of lecturer/speaker organization</b></p>	<p>Listen for the speaker to forecast organization of the lecture (e.g., phrases like “Today I want to talk about,” or “By the end of this lecture, you should be convinced that...”)</p> <p>Look for lecture outlines on the board or on handouts. If the speaker uses an outline, record it on the right side of the notes.</p> <p>Use arrows/lines/circles/numbers to connect related ideas.</p>

<p><b>Use the speaker's style to identify important points</b></p>	<p>Become familiar with the speaker's style.</p> <p>Listen for important points that might be emphasized when the speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pauses or slows down</li> <li>• repeats a point</li> <li>• modulates the volume of her/his voice</li> <li>• uses introductory phrases (e.g., "The four main points are" or "Note the relationship")</li> <li>• writes on the board</li> <li>• gestures or uses visual aids</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keep up with the speaker</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><b>Speaker says:</b> "Hippocrates, a Greek who is considered to be the Father of Medicine, was born on the island of Cos in 460 B.C."</p> <p><b>Notes say:</b> "<i>Hippocrates (Gr.) Father of Med. B. Cos 460 B.C.</i></p> <p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><b>Speaker says:</b> "George Washington was not, in a sense, America's first president."</p> <p><b>Notes say:</b> "<i>G. Wash. Not Am's 1st Pres.?</i>"</p>	<p>Write only the important ideas such as names, places, dates, events, examples, terms, definitions, causes, effects, evaluations, cross references; make it brief, but clear.</p> <p>Use abbreviations for familiar words.</p>
<p><b>Be alert to the speaker's stance</b></p>	<p>Some lecturers attempt to persuade, as well as inform, listeners; when applicable, note ideas/references/opinions that provide insight into the speaker's point of view.</p>
<p><b>Review notes shortly after a lecture</b></p>	<p>Develop study questions and identify main ideas.</p> <p>Fill in details for clarity.</p> <p>Look up and add the definitions of new words/terminology.</p> <p>Identify information that is unclear and/or questions that need to be answered; write and mark questions in the text of notes or at the end where they will be easily found; get answers to the questions from other students and/or the speaker.</p> <p>Add symbols to highlight important ideas and key words.</p> <p>Delete irrelevant information.</p> <p>Review the overall organization of the material; add symbols to make the organization clear or rewrite for clarity, as needed.</p> <p>Write a summary of the significant ideas.</p>
<p><b>Make use of the format</b></p>	<p>Spread out or hold notes so that the right side of the page is covered; review ideas and answer study questions from the left column; use specifics on the right side as an answer key. (<b>Important step</b>—this is your single most powerful learning tool!)</p> <p>Engage in an oral quiz with others, using study questions from the left column.</p> <p>Cover the specifics on the right side with blank paper; write answers to the study questions and explanations of the main ideas.</p>

<b>Write</b>	<p>Write summaries of the most important material in the notes.</p> <p>Write questions you want to ask your teacher.</p> <p>Write anticipated test questions beyond those already in the left column; write answers to these questions.</p>
<b>Review</b>	<p>Frequently review notes to keep information and unanswered questions fresh in your mind.</p> <p>Recite information from notes.</p> <p>Exchange notes with others to flesh out information and understanding.</p> <p>Use notes in study groups to provide a common ground of material for reference and review.</p> <div data-bbox="898 1205 1429 1887"></div>

## Nonfiction Storyboard

**T**o understand a nonfiction text (newspaper article, essay, etc.), it is often valuable to “break down” the elements of the text to see them more clearly and to “capture” the main ideas. A good way to do this is through a storyboard. A storyboard is a series of frames arranged in order from the beginning of the text to the end. Each frame contains a recap of main ideas from a specific section of the text you’ve read. Here’s how to set it up:


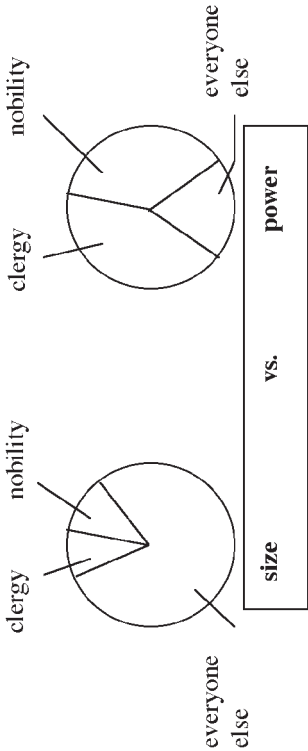


1. As you read the assigned text, identify key information (especially the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* elements) and then write questions in the margins. Identify the main sections of the text by paying attention to where main ideas begin and end. (These do not always correspond with paragraph breaks.) Draw lines to separate the sections.
2. Divide a blank sheet of paper into picture frames, creating the same number of boxes/frames as the number of sections you identified in the text. (If there are more than six sections, you’ll probably need a second piece of paper.)
3. In each storyboard frame, write a summary of the corresponding section of the text; next, create an illustration and a question for the same section. (See the example on the next page.) Finally, indicate the text page(s) the frame covers.
4. If you are reading the same text as another student, share and compare your storyboards to see what you might add or revise.

*An example of a nonfiction storyboard follows.*

Student Sample

# Nonfiction Storyboard

**Note:** To ensure copy quality, this sample (originally done by hand) has been reproduced using computer graphics.

<p><b>Summary:</b> The Tennis Court Oath determined that France would no longer be ruled by a monarch, thus illustrating the ideas of liberty and freedom for all. A democratic society had finally taken hold in France.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Whatever happened to a little common courtesy and respect among people in general?</p>	
<p><b>Summary:</b> The class divisions in France, the three estates (clergy, nobility, bourgeois), were inherently unequal in their design, and were a reflection of the archaic feudal system.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Why was change so difficult to accomplish in France?</p>	<div><div><div>clergy</div><div>nobility</div><div>everyone else</div></div><div><div>clergy</div><div>nobility</div><div>everyone else</div></div><div>vs.</div><div><div>size</div><div>power</div></div></div> 
<p><b>Summary:</b> Robespierre's reign of terror may be viewed as an extreme act, which, although horrible, did provoke the Frenchpeople to claim their voice in government.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Why did Robespierre think that it was necessary to kill so many people in his attempt to preserve the Republic?</p>	
<p><b>Summary:</b> The fall of the Bastille in 1794 is the symbol for the necessity of the freedom of France. It demonstrated that the people would stop at nothing to gain their freedom and that the monarchy was weakened.</p> <p><b>Question:</b> What were the King's views of this "revolt"?</p>	

# Nonfiction Storyboard

## Instructions

After completing a section of reading, write a short summary, create an illustration, and write a question. Divide paper into the same number of frames as sections, paragraphs, or chapters you will be reading.

Summary:	Summary:
Illustration:	Illustration:
Question:	Question:
Page(s):	Page(s):
Summary:	Summary:
Illustration:	Illustration:
Question:	Question:
Page(s):	Page(s):

## Fiction Storyboard

To understand a fictional text (short story, novel, etc.), it is often valuable to slow down your reading and “break down” the elements of the text. Among other things, this will help you identify plot elements and sequence, notice the development of characters, acknowledge the significance of setting, recognize prevalent themes, appreciate stylistic techniques, and establish underlying tones. A good tool for breaking down these elements is a storyboard—a series of frames arranged in order from the beginning of the text to the end, with each frame containing a recap of main ideas from a specific section of the text you’ve read. Here’s how to set it up:

1. As you read the assigned text (a short story or a chapter or two from a novel), identify key information for works of fiction (plot, conflict, character, setting, theme, style, tone, etc.), and make notes about them in the margins.
2. Identify sections/chunks of the text by paying close attention to places where main plot threads begin and end, where new conflicts or characters are introduced, where setting or time changes, and where messages, themes, style, and tone are highlighted. Draw lines to separate the sections.
3. Divide a blank sheet of paper into picture frames, creating the same number of boxes/frames as the number of sections identified in the text. (If there are more than six sections, you’ll probably need a second piece of paper.)
4. For each section of the storyboard, develop a thought-provoking question, select a significant quotation, and/or choose several key words, and write them in the frame. Next, draw an illustration or diagram that helps depict/clarify/explain what you have indicated in writing. Finally, record the page(s) the frame covers. What you include in your frames will depend upon your focus. For example:
  - If you are trying to show the plot sequence, then each frame will show one major event that happens in the story.
  - If you are trying to show the development of a theme, then each frame will include a significant quotation and key words, phrases, and/or an illustration that show evidence of this theme.
  - If you are trying to show the development of a character, then each frame will include a significant quotation, key words, phrases, and/or an illustration to show what you know about the character from that particular section of the text (what the character said or did or what other characters said about him/her).

**e** Don’t try to create one storyboard for a very long text (like a whole novel) or for every literary element. You’ll either have too many frames or your frames will be so general that they won’t be very effective. When reading a novel, narrow your focus to one, two, or three chapters, depending on their length; when planning your storyboard, determine its focus.

**Be sure you are clear about your focus or the teacher’s assignment before you establish your storyboard frames.**

5. If you are reading the same text as another student, share and compare your storyboards to see what each of you might add or revise.




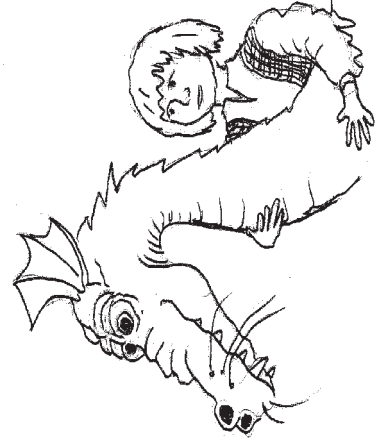

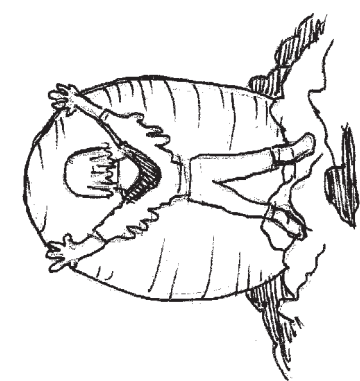
*An example of a fiction storyboard follows.*

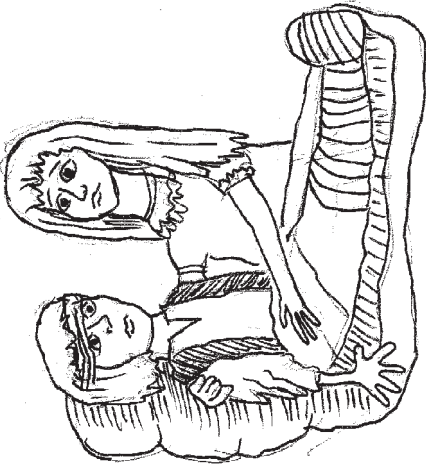
# Student Sample

## Fiction Storyboard

### Focus: Plot

**Note:** To ensure copy quality, this sample (originally done by hand) has been reproduced using computer graphics.

 <p>“A bronze rider could aspire to become Weyrleader! Well, Keevan would console himself, brown riders could aspire to become wingseconds, and that wasn’t bad. He’d even settle for a green dragon; they were small, but so was he. No matter! He simply had to impress a dragon his first time in the Hatching Ground” (122).</p>	 <p>“Beterli wrenched the shovel from Keevan’s hands. ‘Guess!’”</p> <p>“‘I’ll have that shovel back Beterli,’ Keevan straightened up . . . He yanked the shovel from Beterli’s loosened grasp. Snarling, the older boy tried to regain possession, but Keevan clung with all his strength to the handle . . .” (126).</p>
 <p>“‘I like to believe that dragons see into a man’s heart,’ Keevan’s foster mother, Mende, told him. ‘If they find goodness, honesty, a flexible mind, patience, courage—and you’ve got that in quantity, dear Keevan—that’s what dragons look for’” (121).</p>	 <p>“‘Any boy who is over twelve Turns has the right to stand in the Hatching Ground,’ K’last replied, a slight smile on his face. . . . ‘Only a dragon—each particular dragon—knows what he wants in a rider. We certainly can’t tell. Time and again, the theorists . . . are surprised by dragon choice. They never seem to make mistakes, however’” (124).</p>
<p>“The Smallest Dragonboy” by Anne McCaffrey</p>  <p>“Although Keevan lengthened his walking stride as far as his legs would stretch, he couldn’t quite keep up with the other candidates. . . . Just as he knew many other things that his foster mother told him he ought not to know, Keevan knew that Beterli, the most senior of the boys, set that spanking pace just to embarrass him, the smallest dragonboy” (120).</p>	 <p>“‘I’m of age,’ Keevan kept his voice level, telling himself not to be bothered by mere words” (123).</p> <p>“‘Yah!’ Beterli made a show of standing on his toe tips. ‘You can’t even see over an egg: Hatching Day, you better get in front or the dragons won’t see you at all’” (123).</p>

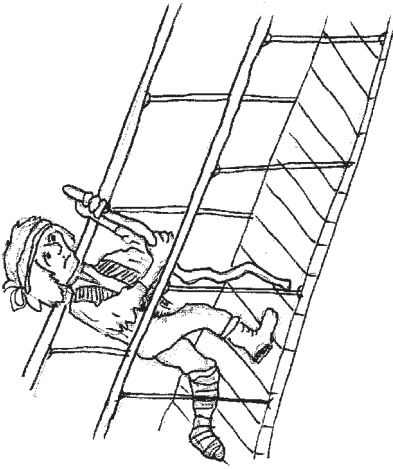


“‘I’m still a candidate?’ Keevan asked urgently” (128).

“‘Well, you are and you aren’t, lovey,’ his foster mother said” (128).

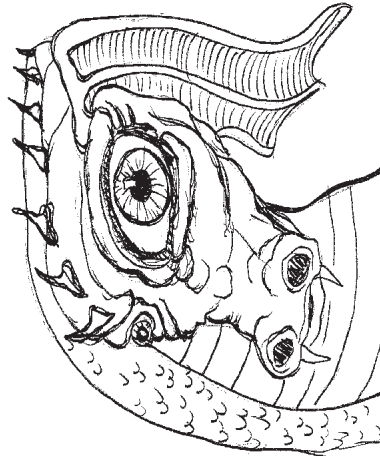


“The hard pace he had set himself and his cruel disappointment took their double toll of Keevan. He tripped and collapsed, sobbing, to the warm sands” (130).

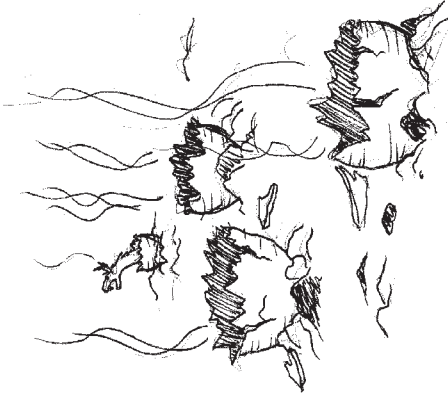


“Gingerly he took a step. The broken leg dragged. It hurt in spite of the numbweed, but what was pain to a dragonman? Gritting his teeth and blinking away tears, Keevan scrambled down the ramp” (129).

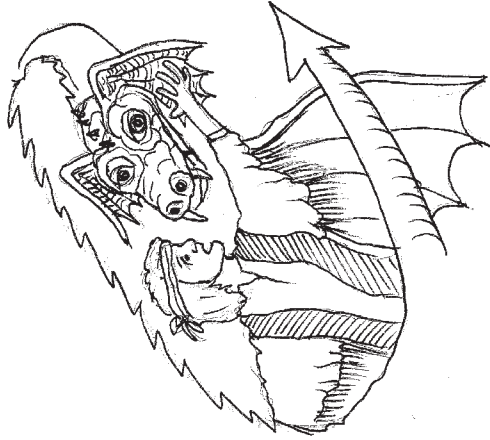
“Incredulous, Keevan lifted his head and stared into the glowing jeweled eyes of a small bronze dragon” (130).



“Keevan dragged himself to his knees, oblivious of the pain in his leg. He wasn’t even aware that he was ringed by the boys passed over, while thirty-one pairs of resentful eyes watched him Impress the dragon” (132).



“Suddenly a large gap appeared in the white human wall, and Keevan had his first sight of the eggs. There didn’t seem to be any left uncracked, and he could see the lucky boys standing beside wobble-legged dragons” (130).



“The Weymen looked on, amused and surprised at the draconic choice, which could not be forced. Could not be questioned. Could not be changed” (132).

## Summary

**T**he process of summarizing requires reading, thinking, and writing. It requires you to break down a text, analyze its parts, and piece them back together again using your own words but maintaining the author's original intent.

A written summary has four defining features:

- It is short.
- It tells what is most important to the author.
- It is written in your own words.
- It states the information someone unfamiliar with the reading would need to have in order to understand the author's main argument, central ideas, and the connections between them.

Follow these steps to help you write a summary:

1. Preview the text by looking through it and reading captions, notes, headings, sub-headings, charts/graphs, and identifying key words (usually in bold or italics). Read the first and last paragraphs. Note the following:
  - Author:
  - Author's credentials (if known):
  - Publication type:
  - Title of the text:
  - Topic:
  - Date of publication:
  - Based on the title and other features of the text, what information/ideas might this text present?
  - Will the text present a negative or positive view of the topic?
  - What argument or position about the topic might the text present?
  - Turn the title into a question:
  - Answer the question after reading the text:

2. Quickly read through the text, paying attention to the big ideas, problems, or concepts addressed. Your goal is to get a general feel for the text, how it flows, and what the author wants you to know. Think about the text as a whole; what does it all add up to?

Given this quick read, what is the topic?

What is the message about the topic? (the big idea/problem/concept that is addressed)

3. Re-read the text very carefully and annotate: highlight main ideas, make notes in the margins, write questions you need clarified, etc. Your goal here is to identify the central idea of each paragraph and try to figure out how each individual paragraph links to the main topic of the text. When this step is completed, your thoughts and ideas should be evident in the notes you've written on the text.
4. Look back at your annotations and determine which paragraphs go together, meaning they serve the same purpose and form a "chunk." Sometimes two or three paragraphs may refer to the same aspect of the topic. For example, an author might use two paragraphs to explain why the topic is important. Thus, these paragraphs can be chunked together as they serve one purpose: to establish the importance of the topic. Draw a box around the paragraphs which should be chunked together. To help determine where to draw your boxes, notice where the author shifts purpose or moves from one idea to the next. The points at which these shifts occur indicate where one chunk ends and a new chunk begins.
5. Using the information gathered through your annotation of the text and your chunking, fill in the handout titled "Charting a Text." See Student Handouts 1.5b and 1.5c.
6. Carefully review the analysis on your chart and determine the author's main argument or stand concerning the topic. Write your ideas in the space provided at the end of your chart.
7. Work together with peers to discuss/negotiate how you have charted the text AND try to reach consensus regarding the author's main argument on the topic. Adjust your notes as needed.
8. Using all the information you've compiled, complete the summary template provided. See Student Handout 1.5d.

# Charting a Text

Text Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Paragraphs	Saying	Doing
Chunk/group the paragraphs of the text according to purpose or idea. Which paragraphs seem to have the same purpose?	What is the author <i>saying</i> in these paragraphs? What are the essential details which make up the paragraphs?	Considering what the author is saying, determine what the author is <i>doing</i> in the paragraphs. What purpose does the author intend these details to serve? Begin your classifications with present progressive verbs. (See the handout titled “Charting Verbs.”)

Paragraphs	Saying	Doing

***Determining the Author's Main Argument:*** Accounting for everything that the author is doing in the text and considering the relationship among ideas, what is the author's main argument?

\_\_\_\_\_ Is it explicit?

\_\_\_\_\_ Is it implicit?

***Author's Main Argument:***

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# Charting Verbs

(verbs to help you describe what an author is doing)

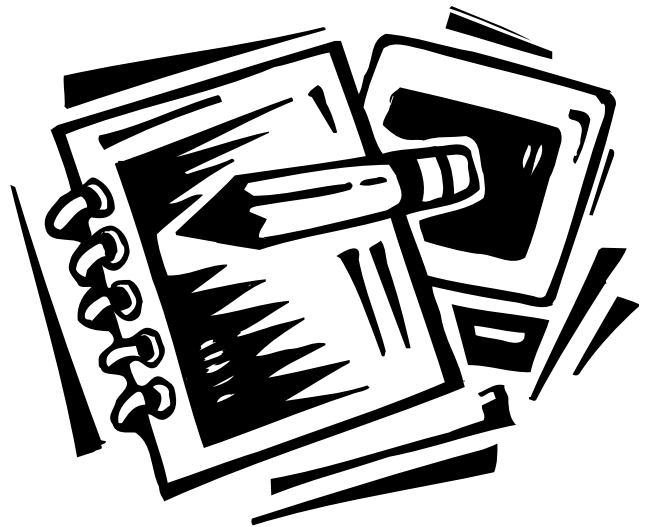
acknowledging	emphasizing	proving
allowing	explaining	refining
arguing	exposing	restating
asking	focusing	showing that
asserting that	historicizing	suggesting
breaking down	hypothesizing	supporting
bringing up	illuminating	telling that
charting	illustrating	undermining
claiming	inquiring	upholding
clarifying	introducing	using
classifying	lamenting that	_____
comparing	maintaining	_____
concluding that	noting that	_____
contextualizing	offering	_____
contradicting	paralleling	_____
countering	pointing out that	_____
declaring	posing	_____
defining	prefacing	_____
differentiating	presenting	_____
discussing	proposing	_____
distinguishing	providing	_____

## One Paragraph Summary Template

\_\_\_\_\_ (author's credentials), \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (author's first and last name), in her/his/the \_\_\_\_\_ (genre)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (title of text),  
\_\_\_\_\_ (verb: argues, states, suggests, hypothesizes, discusses, notes...) that  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (main claim or argument advanced in the text).  
She/he supports her/his claim by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. She/he next proceeds to show that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Finally, she/he argues (or some other such verb) that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ (author's last name) purpose is to  
\_\_\_\_\_ in order to  
\_\_\_\_\_.  
She/he \_\_\_\_\_ (verb: adopts, establishes...) a(n) \_\_\_\_\_  
tone for \_\_\_\_\_ (intended audience).

## Tips for Writing the Summary

- Use the charting activity to help you with the summary. You might summarize each chunk to create your summary.
- To make the summary short, keep out the details that fill out the central idea. Do not include examples, illustrations, and little stories. Instead, give the central principles to which they refer.
- Make sure your first sentence introduces the author's credentials, the author's name, the genre, the title of the text, and the author's main argument or claim.
- Translate and explain difficult passages or ideas where necessary. Do not quote except for the occasional term or short phrase.
- Avoid the words "the way," "how," or "about," as in "This article is about implicit racism in classic American literature. Instead, use active voice and formulate sentences such as: *Toni Morrison argues that racism is implicit in some classic American literature.*
- Write your summary in third person, present tense.



# Scoring Guide for One Paragraph Summary

	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<b>Content</b>	<p>Clearly summarizes the author's main ideas and explains where necessary.</p> <p>Demonstrates an accurate understanding of the original text.</p>	<p>Includes some extraneous information and has trouble distinguishing between main ideas and examples.</p> <p>Includes important ideas but does not explain them sufficiently to show full understanding of the text.</p>	<p>Repeats the information from the text without explaining or translating the ideas for the reader.</p> <p>Does not demonstrate understanding of the text.</p>
<b>Organization</b>	<p>Chooses the most important points and organizes them in a logical manner to best represent the original text's intent.</p> <p>Examples and stories are omitted.</p>	<p>Summarizes the exact sequence of important ideas from the original text instead of developing own organizational logic.</p> <p>May include examples or stories that aren't necessary.</p>	<p>Lists some of the points the author makes but omits important points or includes too much information.</p> <p>Unable to select among the details.</p>
<b>Language Use</b>	<p>Uses his/her own words to explain and summarize.</p> <p>The summary is generally free of errors.</p>	<p>Repeats quite a bit of the original vocabulary instead of translating it into own words.</p> <p>May contain some sentence level errors that are distracting to the reader.</p>	<p>Uses the exact vocabulary of the original text often quoting directly without citing.</p> <p>Gives own opinion or adds other evaluative commentary.</p> <p>Contains many sentence level errors that interfere with understanding.</p>

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## Stages of the Writing Process

<b>Prewrite</b>	You start the writing process by generating ideas about a topic and figuring out what and how you think. You can <i>cluster, brainstorm, debate, freewrite, fantasize, visualize, draw, read, talk, research, etc.</i> The idea is to have a pool of information from which to draw to begin your piece.
<b>Draft</b>	This is where you allow your ideas to take shape. During this stage, you form a <i>coherent, organized</i> rough draft that starts to express your point. Keeping your audience (teacher, other students, college admissions officers, etc.) in mind, this is where you figure out what you really want to say and begin to organize your ideas. Remember that your first draft may change substantially as you make revisions.
<b>Reader Response</b>	This is where you share your work with others for the purpose of getting feedback on the content of the piece. The focus is on the <i>ideas</i> communicated in your writing, not necessarily on grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. (Sometimes, however, your ideas may be confusing to the reader because of mistakes in spelling, grammar, or punctuation; in this case, the reader should give you feedback about these kinds of errors.) Your reader becomes your audience and he/she will give you ideas, comments, and responses so that you can better revise your piece. It is your responsibility to get strong, useful feedback from your reader—ask for it!
<b>Revise</b>	This is where you <i>re-see</i> or <i>re-think</i> your writing. You look at your work again for the purpose of improving and clarifying. You use your reader’s feedback to help make decisions about changes. The idea is to finish with a clear and complete piece that truly expresses your ideas in the best possible manner. You may need to revise several times.
<b>Edit</b>	After you have made your revisions and are close to a final draft, your paper must be checked again for mechanical correctness. Editing is where others read your paper for the purpose of finding errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Your editor will use some kind of abbreviations (see your teacher for ideas) to show you where mistakes are contained in your piece. These must be corrected before you make your final draft.
<b>Final Draft/ Publish</b>	This is where you take your final piece “public” by presenting it to an audience. This is your time to shine.
<b>Self-Evaluate/ Reflect</b>	This is where you think and write about your creative process, documenting what you’ve learned about yourself and writing. This is also where you set future goals and/or determine your next steps or needs as a writer.

## Choosing Your Audience, Purpose, and Form for Writing

As you think about your writing assignment, it is important to consider **to whom** you are writing (audience), **why** you are writing (purpose), and **the form** of your writing (essay, etc.). These decisions will impact how you draft your paper. Below are listed some suggestions to consider. Add your own ideas to the list.

### Audience

- other students
- college admissions officers
- family members
- other teachers
- the general public
- a scholarship committee
- the school board or city council
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose

- to persuade
- to inform
- to pass along family stories
- to demonstrate understanding
- to entertain
- to explain
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Form

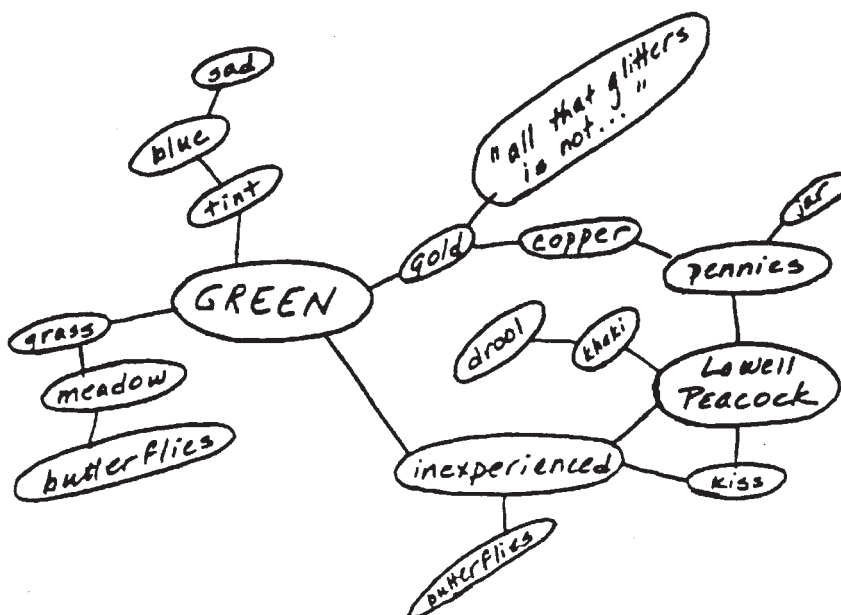
- essay
- letter
- story
- poem
- diary
- article
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Using Clustering and Quickwriting to Get Started

1. Write a nucleus word or idea in the center of the page. Draw a circle around it. This gives the brain a visual pattern of what it will be doing with ideas.
2. Record what comes to mind when you think of the word in the circle. Write down all of the words and phrases that you associate with the nucleus word or with the other words you add. Circle each word/phrase and connect it to the nucleus or the part of the cluster that prompted it. Don't censor yourself! Write down everything that comes to mind even if it seems random and unconnected to the nucleus.
3. Generate as many associations as you can.
4. At some point during your cluster, you may feel a sense of direction. When you feel that shift from free association toward direction, you're ready to do a quickwrite (see next step). If you don't feel a sense of direction, revisit your completed cluster and highlight the ideas that seem most important to you at the moment. Then, move on to the quickwrite.
5. Write for 5–10 minutes about the highlighted ideas or your emerging thoughts, using words/ideas from the cluster that seem related and relevant.
6. Working with a partner, in groups, or with the entire class, share your cluster and quickwrite.

### Example

#### Cluster (for nucleus word "green")



#### Quickwrite

To be "green" at something means to be new at it and sometimes not very good at it. It reminds me of my first kiss. Lowell Peacock came over almost every day in the summer when I was seven years old. He always brought his collection of old pennies—copper-green pennies. Lowell looked like a homeless person, wearing faded clothes and an old army helmet from his uncle. He hated to take off the helmet because it covered his wild hair and big ears. One day I was hunting for bugs and Lowell was searching for pennies. He kept talking about how important it was to be kissed—how we needed "experience." Before I knew what hit me, Lowell jumped at me and planted his cracked drooling lips on my face. He

was definitely green—he almost missed my lips entirely. I was shocked and mad. I stomped on his foot, threw my long black braid in his face, and huffed into the house. So much drama for such a short kiss!

## Verbal Response: Guidelines for Reading Aloud and Listening to Writing

In order for your reader response session to be effective, it is important that you remember how to be a good reader and a good listener. Please follow these guidelines:

### **Reader:**

- Read slowly, but with a natural rhythm.
- Face the listener and speak in his/her direction, not down at the paper.
- Don't offer apologies or add comments about the writing; just read what's on the page.

### **Listener:**

- Have pen/pencil and paper ready to take notes.
- Face the writer and be attentive so that he/she knows you're interested in listening and giving feedback.
- Don't interrupt while the writer is reading aloud. Write your questions in your notes to ask later.
- Use abbreviations and short words as you take notes. Don't get bogged down trying to write complete sentences.

## Guidelines for Verbal Response (Partner)

1. Explain to your partner your paper's audience, purpose, and form. Then, read your *introduction* aloud while your partner takes notes (what about the introduction drew him/her in, what was ineffective, what he/she expects the rest of the paper to be about based on the introduction). Your partner should then share his/her reactions and expectations with you. Based on this feedback, determine whether or not the introduction was effective for establishing the main point or tone of the paper as you intended and, with help from your partner, take notes on the rough draft about what needs to be added, changed, or deleted.
2. Read your *first body paragraph* aloud while your partner records the main idea, ideas/words/sentences that stand out as strong, and questions/areas of confusion. One way to organize notes for quick jotting is to create three columns labeled:

Main Idea	+	?

Your partner should write his/her ideas in the appropriate column while listening to your paper and also record key words that will remind him/her of a passage for later discussion. After your partner responds to your writing, determine whether the paragraph is effectively communicating what you intended. Discuss your partner's questions and take notes on the rough draft about what needs to be added, changed, or deleted.

3. Read your *next body paragraph* and follow the same steps as in #2 above. Repeat this process for each body paragraph.
4. Before you read your conclusion, ask your partner what he/she expects to hear based on the paper so far. (You are trying to find out whether or not you have led the listener ["reader"] to the appropriate conclusion or state of mind.) Take notes on what your partner says.
5. Read the *conclusion* aloud while your partner takes notes on strong words, sentences, or ideas/questions. Your partner should also pay attention to whether the conclusion simply repeats the introduction or restates/wraps up the paper in an interesting and thought-provoking way. As your partner shares his/her notes and reactions with you, take notes on the rough draft about what needs to be added, changed, or deleted.
6. Share any last comments/ideas about the paper with your partner, and then switch roles and repeat steps 1–5 with your partner's paper.

## Guidelines for Verbal Response (Small Group)

1. Distribute a copy of your paper to the other group members. Explain your paper's purpose, form, and audience. Then, read your paper aloud from beginning to end. Group members should listen (no notetaking) to get a sense of your paper as a whole. As you read, do not make apologies such as, "This is just a first draft" or "My baby brother kept me up until four this morning, so this paper isn't very good." Response groups should be safe places for writing to be shared.
2. Read your paper aloud again (yes, a second time!). During this second reading, group members should jot down comments, using symbols like + for words, phrases, or ideas that strike the listener favorably, - for those that seem less effective, and ? for those that are unclear. A three-column approach, such as shown below, can be used for notetaking.

+	-	?
---	---	---

Listeners write their ideas in the appropriate column as they listen. As they take notes, they should also record key words that will remind them of a passage for later discussion.

3. After the second reading, group members should share their comments with you ("I really liked..." "I wasn't sure what you meant by..." "It doesn't seem effective when..." "I wanted more information about..."). Listeners may also ask you to reread particular passages to help them reframe their commentary. Comments such as "It's good" or "It just seems like it's missing something" need to be reworded to identify specific words or elements of the writing that show why it's good or what might be missing. Ask your group members for specific details—it is your responsibility to get quality feedback.

While group members are sharing their comments with you, do two things:

1. Remain silent (do not defend your paper); and
2. Make a list of comments from the group, coding each one as the responders coded theirs (+, -, ?).

Encourage your response group members to read everything from their notes, even if the comment has already been made. You should note everything, including repeat comments. (Indicate repetitions with check marks.) At the end of the feedback session, ask for clarification of any of the comments.

4. Your group then continues with the reading of another student's work, following steps 1–3.

## Guidelines for Written Response (Peer)

1. Think about 2–3 questions or areas of concern you have about your paper. Write these questions/concerns at the top of your rough draft; also write your paper’s audience, purpose, and form.
2. Swap papers with another student in class. Read the questions/concerns posed by him/her and then read the paper TWO times. It is helpful to read the paper once without making any comments so that you can get a feel for the whole piece and what the writer is trying to say.
3. On the second reading, write your thoughts/ideas in the margins of the rough draft (or on a separate paper) as you go along. Your comments should be honest and detailed. Start with phrases such as “I really liked...” or “I wasn’t sure what you meant by...” or “It doesn’t seem effective when...” or “I wanted more information about...” Do NOT write comments such as “This is good,” “Don’t change a thing,” or “You’re all done.” These comments are not effective for helping the writer revise. See Student Handout 2.12 for more ideas.
4. Using questions/directions from Student Handouts 2.8/2.9, give additional written feedback. Focus on the most appropriate questions for the writing assignment or on the questions assigned by your teacher. Write your ideas directly on the rough draft or on a separate paper (whichever the teacher and/or writer prefers).
5. Review the writers’ questions/concerns written at the top of the draft. Write a response to them.
6. Return the paper to its owner, and, if time permits, discuss your feedback with him/her.

# Questions for Guiding Reader Response I

## (General Writing Assignments)

After listening to or reading a paper, respond on a separate sheet of paper to the appropriate questions below (or the questions your teacher has identified for you). Remember that not every question will apply to every paper you read—sometimes the paper’s style or focus will dictate the kinds of questions upon which to focus. As you read the paper, feel free to add other feedback beyond these questions and to make comments in the margins.

1. Identify three words, phrases, or images in the paper that are especially strong, and explain why.
2. List any ideas, images, or words that need clarification, and explain why.
3. Indicate the parts of the paper that hold your interest and those that don’t. Explain why.
4. What is the main idea of this paper? Could you tell that easily, or did you have to work at figuring it out?
5. Identify the parts of the topic that are most clearly addressed in the paper and any parts of the topic that have not been addressed.
6. Indicate any portions of the paper that need additional details, description, emphasis, or development. Explain why.
7. Identify any generalizations or clichés that need revision.
8. Identify any portions of the paper that you think should be deleted, and explain why.
9. Identify places where you wanted more variety in the sentences or more variety in word choice.
10. Explain any suggestions you have for reorganizing the paper to make it more effective.
11. Comment on the effectiveness of the title. Offer suggestions.
12. List any questions that the paper does not answer. What are you left wondering?
13. Considering the writer’s chosen audience, what else does this paper need?
14. If you were going to revise this paper for its content (not for correction of grammar, punctuation, or spelling), what three things would you do first? List these for the writer.

# Questions for Guiding Reader Response II

## (Thesis Papers)

After listening to or reading a paper, respond on a separate sheet of paper to the appropriate questions below (or the questions your teacher has identified for you). Remember that not every question will apply to every paper you read—sometimes the paper’s style or focus will dictate the kinds of questions upon which to focus. As you read the paper, feel free to add other feedback beyond these questions and to make comments in the margins.

1. How effective is the introduction? In what ways did it arouse your interest? How well does it establish a context for the thesis?
2. What is the thesis or main focus of this paper? Rewrite it in your own words. Is the thesis specific and clear?
3. How effectively does the body connect to the thesis/main focus? Where is this done especially well? Where is the connection shaky? Why?
4. How effective are the transitions between paragraphs? Between ideas within a paragraph? Before and after quotations?
5. Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence or guiding idea that focuses the paragraph? Where does it not? Which are especially effective?
6. Is there adequate support for the thesis? Is there support from all required sources? (If it is a piece about a text, there should be textual examples; if it is a piece about one’s life, there should be specific examples that reveal the writer’s experiences.) Where might support be added?
7. Is each example analyzed fully? Are there at least two sentences explaining each quotation—one on its meaning and another on how that meaning relates to the main focus of the paper (the thesis)? If not, where is more analysis needed?
8. Is the paper a cohesive unit? Which parts need to be connected more fully?
9. How logical and convincing is the overall argument? If not entirely, why not?
10. List any questions that the paper does not answer. What are you left wondering?
11. Considering the writer’s chosen audience, what else does this paper need?
12. Are there parts of the text (novel, story, poem, essay) that run counter to the writer’s interpretation but are ignored in the paper? If so, explain.
13. If using critical articles, are they used intelligently? How well do they relate to the writer’s own ideas? Has the writer expanded on the articles, rather than just endorsing their ideas? If not, where might he/she expand?
14. If you were going to revise this paper for its content (not for correction of grammar, punctuation, or spelling), what three things would you do first? List these for the writer.

## Common Editing Marks

**A**s you read another student's paper, look especially for mistakes that distract you and take you away from the writer's message, for example, errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and sentence construction. (These are called writing conventions). Using Standard English conventions correctly is critical for students who want their ideas to be taken seriously. Giving your full attention to the paper you edit will ensure that the writer gets useful feedback from you, and it will help you strengthen your own writing skills as well.

It's okay if you are not an expert at writing conventions. If you think something is incorrect in the paper, use the editing marks described below. It is up to the writer to determine if something is actually wrong.

### As you read, do the following:

- Circle words you think are misspelled.
- Circle words you think should/should not be capitalized.
- Circle punctuation errors; add missing punctuation as needed.
- Circle verbs you think are in the wrong tense.
- Circle verbs and subjects that do not agree.
- Insert commas and quotation marks as needed when dialogue is used.
- Put parentheses ( ) around awkward phrases or sentences that are difficult to understand on the first reading (awkward, unbalanced, or puzzling for some reason).
- Use a caret ^ to insert a word or punctuation mark.
- Write **RO** to indicate a run-on sentence.
- Write **FRAG** to indicate a sentence fragment.
- Write **TRANS** if a transition is needed.
- Write **PAR** if a new paragraph is needed or **NO PAR** if one is not needed.

## Reflection and Self-Evaluation Questions

Re-read the first draft and final draft of your paper. Then choose 4–5 of the most appropriate questions below to answer about your paper (or answer the specific questions assigned to you by your teacher). Write your responses on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is the writing prompt you responded to? If you chose the prompt, explain why.
2. Who is your audience? What is the message you are trying to communicate to your audience? How effectively do you think you conveyed this message? Why?
3. What are you most proud of in this paper? How were you able accomplish this?
4. What problems do you see in your piece? What are you least happy with? Why?
5. What did you learn about writing from completing this paper that you can apply to future assignments? Discuss the specific things you want to work on in your next paper.
6. What reader response feedback did you *not* take? Why?
7. Describe the specific changes you made from your first draft to your final draft and how these changes improved your paper. Be as detailed and specific as possible. Refer to specific pages, paragraphs, and passages so your teacher can easily find the parts you're describing.
8. Describe what you like about your revision. Brag a little. Be specific in referring to pages, paragraphs, passages—even words or phrases—that you particularly like. Explain why you are pleased with these changes.
9. What was helpful to you as you wrote this piece? What contributed to your success?
10. What part of the writing process was most difficult for you? Why? What questions do you have?
11. Describe and discuss the problems you were unable to solve in your final draft (what you still don't like about it or what you are still uncertain about). Be specific, telling where, what, and why you feel as you do.
12. Finish the following statement and then explain it:  
*"As a writer, this paper shows that I..."*
13. What goals do you have that this piece of writing works toward meeting? How?
14. What other question(s) would you like to answer?
15. Compare your final draft with the rubric and rate your paper. Explain your rating.

## Responding to Student Writing As a Reader, Not a Critic

### Goal: Focus on your response to the piece of writing!

Read through the piece, paying careful attention to how you are responding as you read. Mark the paper in three ways: (1) draw a wiggly line under words, phrases, or sentences that you especially like or to which you have a strong positive response; (2) draw a straight line under parts that are confusing or cause you to have a negative response because of wording, organization, etc.; (3) put a ✓ at the end of any line that contains a mechanical error (or errors).

Using “I” statements or open-ended questions in the margins, make comments about your responses to specific sections. Your comments should communicate how you felt as you started to read (intrigued, confused, bored, enlightened, skeptical, frustrated, engaged, curious, etc.), how you felt at various points during your reading experience, and how you felt when you finished reading. Be sure to explain why you felt each emotion. *Remember that you are not just talking about the writing; you are reporting on your experience of it.* It is the writer’s responsibility to make revision decisions based on your responses.

### Use “I” Statements

(Let the writer know how you responded.)

Helpful Things to Say	Things Not to Say
“I wanted to hear more about...”	“I think you should change...”
“I wasn’t interested until the part when...”	“I felt you did a good job with...”
“I didn’t understand why... happened.”	“I believe that you should....”
“I was excited, scared, confused, engaged, etc. when...”	“I thought the paper was pretty good.”

### Ask Honest Questions

(Ones that you actually want answered and do not know the answers to.)

Helpful Things to Say	Things Not to Say
“What made you think that the narrator is a little boy?”	“Don’t you think it would be good to...?”
“How does this example relate to your main point?”	“Wouldn’t it be better if you...?”
“When did the car break down? I missed that part.”	“Why not cut the part about...?”

Used with permission from Blaze Newman, San Dieguito High School Academy

## Writing Process Rubric

The following rubric can be used by the teacher and/or students to evaluate the writing process in which students engaged as they developed their paper.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of significant prewriting; it is clear the writer used the prewriting process to formulate ideas and a plan for writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of prewriting; it is clear the writer used prewriting to generate ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some evidence of prewriting, but it is unclear whether the student used the prewriting process to prepare for drafting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence of prewriting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer generated multiple drafts, using reader responses to guide the revision process; it is clear that the writer is taking charge of the drafting and revising processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer generated at least two drafts using reader responses to guide revision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer generated one or more drafts, but it is unclear whether reader responses were used to develop the draft(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer generated one draft with little or no meaningful revision</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received very productive reader response—quality and quantity are high; the feedback was very useful for revision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received adequate reader response; the feedback was useful for revision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received some reader response, but the feedback was too general, or not substantive enough, to be useful for significant revision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence of reader response</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received productive editing feedback; feedback was used to make corrections in the paper; it is clear that the writer sought out multiple opportunities to develop an error-free paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received adequate editing feedback; feedback was used to make significant corrections in the paper; it is clear that errors were minimized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer received some editing feedback, but not enough for significant corrections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence of editing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer published the final draft to meet the specific demands of the chosen audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer published the final draft to meet the specific demands of the chosen audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer published a final draft, but it did not adequately meet the demands of the chosen audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer didn't publish a final draft or the final draft does not address the chosen audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer thoughtfully self-evaluated/reflected upon his/her process and/or learning, and established specific goals, steps, and/or needs for future writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer self-evaluated/reflected upon his/her process and/or learning, and established goals, steps, and/or needs for future writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writer attempted self-evaluation/reflection, but did not adequately focus upon his/her process or learning; goals, steps, and/or needs for future writing are too general or vague to be useful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence of self-evaluation/reflection; no evidence of goals, steps, and/or needs for future writing</li> </ul>

## Overview of the Three-Part Essay

### **Introduction**

*(one or more paragraphs)*

*Includes:*

- opening sentences
- thesis
- forecast

### **Body**

*(several paragraphs)*

*Each paragraph includes:*

- topic sentence
- analysis
- evidence and interpretation of evidence
- anchor

### **Conclusion**

*(one or more paragraphs)*

*Includes:*

- summary
- intensified insight

## Three-Part Essay Structure

### I. INTRODUCTION: The introduction (one or more paragraphs) contains the following:

<b>opening sentences</b>	capture your reader's attention (use a "hook"); introduce general topic and then narrow to subject of paper; provide background information on topic and/or materials to be considered (e.g., title/author of book(s), time period of study, experiment conducted)
<b>thesis</b>	answer to the question asked/statement of point to be proven (usually a single sentence); focuses essay that follows; offers insight/premise
<b>forecast</b>	a sentence or sentences indicating the subtopics or subdivisions of support that will follow, in the order in which they will appear

### II. BODY: Each supporting paragraph of the body should contain the following:

<b>topic sentence</b>	identifies subject of paragraph and relates it to thesis and essay; develops thesis
<b>analysis of topic sentence</b>	aspect of thesis introduced in topic sentence is developed further
<b>evidence/ interpretation of evidence</b>	evidence that supports thesis and topic sentence; interpretation/analysis or commentary of evidence follows immediately
<b>anchor</b>	final sentence of paragraph that connects evidence and interpretation of evidence to thesis/topic sentence; refreshes reader's mind about purpose/value of paper without becoming repetitive; allows for clear connection between anchor and next body paragraph or conclusion

### III. CONCLUSION: The conclusion (one or more paragraphs) contains the following:

<b>summary/ intensified insight</b>	brief restatement of thesis that does not simply repeat it; brief reminder of points used to prove thesis; intensified insight statement that deepens the idea of the thesis without introducing new topic(s) that require additional proof and leaving the reader with "food for thought"
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# Three-Part Essay Organizer

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION** (one or more paragraphs)

Opening Sentences: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Forecast: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**BODY** (several paragraphs)

Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Analysis: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence/Interpretation of Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Anchor: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Analysis: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Evidence/Interpretation of Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Anchor: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Analysis: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Evidence/Interpretation of Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Anchor: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**CONCLUSION** (one or more paragraphs)

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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Intensified Insight: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Identifying the Components of an Essay

Read the essay below and highlight and label the following components:

- Introduction
  - Opening sentences (what kind of opening did the writer use?)
  - Thesis
  - Forecast
  
- Body Paragraphs
  - Topic sentence
  - Analysis/development of topic sentence
  - Evidence
  - Interpretation of evidence
  - Anchor
  
- Conclusion
  - Summary
  - Intensified insight

## ***Snow Falling on Cedars and the Idea that Justice will Triumph***

***By Rebecca Gunnill (with additions by editor)***

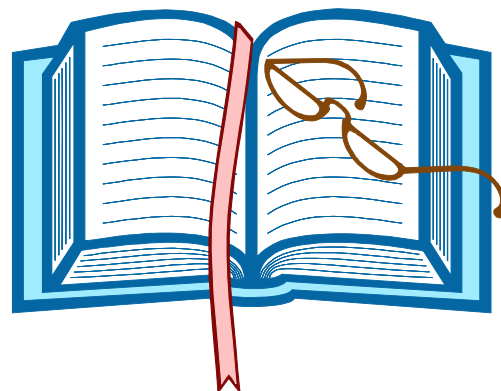
A major part of today's society feels that what is right or good will prevail in any circumstances. The American Dream, the belief that in the United States anything is possible, is a manifestation of this philosophy, as is the fact that in times of crisis, such as after floods or earthquakes, people donate millions of dollars to aid those whose lives have been devastated, trying to repair the damage that has been done in order to make the victims' lives better. In *Snow Falling on Cedars*, David Guterson suggests that no matter what the present is like, justice and happiness will eventually triumph over misfortune. He shows this by chronicling the lives of Fujiko Shibayama and Susan Marie, demonstrating their good fortune through marriage, and by showing the eventual justice that occurs for imprisoned Japanese-Americans and for wrongly-accused Kabuo Miyamoto.

In *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Guterson implies that good fortune will conquer unhappiness. Even the most unfortunate of occurrences will become felicitous if given time to develop. In the early 1900s, Fujiko Shibayama was sent to the U.S. as a picture bride. When she met her husband, she found that "He had nothing" (85) and had little chance of improving his lot in life. Although she was miserable and hated him for a

number of months, she came to love him, and they moved out of the slums and onto an island where they had their own house. With time and effort, Fujiko's situation improved immensely. Another of Guterson's characters, Susan Marie, spent her childhood as a daughter of a poor farmer and toiled in his fields to earn money to buy food. When she was twenty, she married Carl Heine, a prosperous fisherman, and lived with him happily. Over time, her unsatisfactory life becomes pleasant good fortune conquering her earlier hardship. While hardships might be overcome through time and hard work, injustices might also be overcome in the same way.

Guterson intimates that what is right will win out over that which is not. Though it may take a long time, justice will be served in every case. At the beginning of World War II, many Japanese-Americans were forced to move to "relocation camps," their constitutional rights completely ignored. Guterson uses one family to represent the injustice suffered by a whole populace as they are stripped of their belongings and their freedom. Several years later, as World War II fears wind down, Japanese-Americans were freed, justice finally triumphing over wartime paranoia. While Guterson reveals the personal suffering experienced by Japanese-Americans, he also reveals the personal suffering of one man, Kabua Miyamoto, who is wrongly accused of and tried for the murder of Carl Heine. While Miyamoto's suffering is evident, there is a hint that the injustice is noticed and might even be reconciled. During his hearing, Hatsue voices her opinion to Ishmael Chambers. She says, "My husband's trial is unfair" (426). Hatsue's words become prophetic as evidence disproving Miyamoto's guilt is found, and all charges are dropped, fairness prevailing over prejudice. Ishmael Chambers finds the evidence that helps prove Miyamoto's innocence, but is not sure if he wishes to turn it in. After a day, he shows it to Hatsue, and they give it to the police; justice the victor again.

Throughout *Snow Falling on Cedars*, David Guterson repeats the message that though it may seem unlikely, that which is right and just will prevail in any set of circumstances. This optimistic message is good to keep in mind in today's world, which is filled with so much violence and despair. Perhaps if everyone, instead of just a portion of the populace, believed that truth and happiness will triumph, they really would.



# AVID Diagnostic Writing Survey

Please respond to each of the questions or prompts below on a separate sheet of paper. Since I'll be using this information to plan our writing curriculum for the year, please be honest and complete in your responses. I appreciate your help and time.

## Attitudes

1. Do you like to write? If so, WHAT do you like to write? If not, WHY don't you like to write?
2. How do you think writing in high school affects your preparation for college?
3. How do you think writing is used in college?
4. What do you think about giving feedback or receiving feedback on writing assignments?

## Experiences

*(An alternative to answering these questions would be to give me some recent writing samples that actually show what you can do as a writer. If you do this, please identify which paper you especially liked or felt good about and why.)*

1. Have you ever written anything you've especially liked or felt was really good? If so, what was it?
2. What experiences have you had writing academic papers (analysis essay, research paper, argument or position essay, in-class test essay, etc.)?
3. What do you think you need to become a stronger writer of academic papers?
4. What experiences have you had writing personal papers (autobiography, biography, interview, etc.)?
5. What do you think you need to become a stronger writer of personal papers?

## Skills

1. What methods do you use to start a piece of writing (prewriting)?
2. What methods do you use to revise a piece of writing?
3. What is a thesis statement?
4. The two sentences below have no capitalization or punctuation. Please rewrite the sentences, using the appropriate capitalization and punctuation.

*according to forbes magazine donald trump is one of the richest men in the world having assets that far exceed those of the common individual*

*im certain that ucsd will admit many qualified students from our campus however i know that admissions will be tough for everyone in the next few years.*

5. Combine the following three sentences into one sentence. Change the punctuation, word order, word endings, etc. as necessary to accomplish this task.

My sister is the first person in my family to attend college.

She is majoring in psychology.

She is attending Humboldt State University.

6. In 1–2 well-organized paragraphs, respond to this question: Why do you want to attend college?
7. What else do you want to tell me about yourself as a writer OR about what you think you need to improve your writing this year?

## Vocabulary/Concept Map

**Word/Concept**

**Definition or prediction of definition:**

**Compare to (synonyms):**

**Contrast with (antonyms):**

**Examples (from life or reading)**

**Pictures/Symbols**

## Sample Passage

**Directions:** Working in triads, upgrade the underlined vocabulary in the passage below. You may use dictionaries, thesauruses, and words from the word wall, but remember that your goal is to maintain clear writing and enhance or intensify meaning, mood, intent, etc., not to “stuff” the passage with as many “hard” words as possible.

Sadly, Isabella did not know which way to turn. The fact that she stood at a crossroad in her life was clear, but her conscious knowledge of that truth did nothing to help her make a decision. The fact that she knew, intellectually, that she had just two choices, both of which held danger, maybe even death, served only to increase the frozen state of indecision caused by her own fear. For a long time, she stood, still, unable, no unwilling, to move either mind or body. Then, calling upon a will that lay deep in her center, a will saved for a soul in crisis, Isabella found a flicker of her old courage, a part of herself that, with recent events, had been driven deep inside, and she used its warmth to melt the icy fear that, for some time, had left her lifeless, unable to function as she had once functioned. Slowly, Isabella awakened her courage to face the fear that consumed her, choose a path, and continue her journey. She willed the numbness to pass through her, and she willed the warmth to comfort her. She willed life back into her consciousness, her mind, and her limbs. Then, Isabella made her choice, and she took a first step toward an unclear future.

## Practicing “Showing” Writing

### Examples

1. **Telling:** She was mad.

**Showing:** Her jaw tightened and the veins in her temples throbbed. Her eyes flashed darts at me. The words erupted from her mouth: “Stay after class to speak to me, young man.” The final hiss in her voice sent shivers down my spine.

2. **Telling:** He was anxious about the test.

**Showing:** He held his head in both hands and stared down at the paper. One hand tentatively reached for a pencil. But, when the pencil neared the paper, instead of writing, it nervously tapped against the desk. He let go of the pencil and banged his fist against the desk as a muffled groan escaped his lips.

3. **Telling:** The pizza was good.

**Showing:** My mouth watered as the fragrant steam rose off the cheese. The rich blend of yeast, tomatoes, and spices tantalized my nostrils. I gasped with pleasure as I took my first bite into the moist crust, my teeth sinking into the succulent blend of cheese and tomato sauce.

4. **Telling:** His room was really messy.

**Showing:** Clothes were draped over the chair and the desk; books and magazines were scattered across the floor.

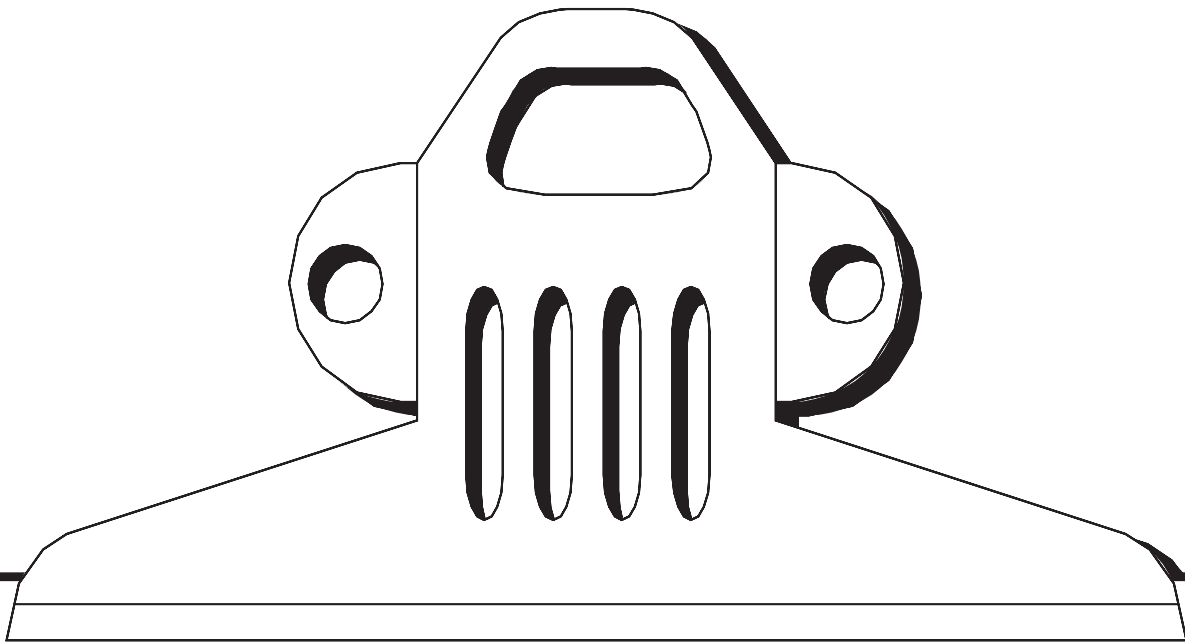
**Showing:** I pushed and pushed, but the door opened only a crack. Inching the broom stick through the crack, I poked at the pile of clothes blocking the door. With a great shove, I toppled the heap and pushed the clothes away from the door. I eased the door open wide enough for me to squeeze through only to find my brother sound asleep on his bed in the middle of another pile of clothes.

5. **Telling:** The garden was colorful.

**Showing:** Red geraniums burst from terra cotta pots. Yellow daisies ranged along the fence, and the deep blue morning glories cascaded down the bank.

6. **Telling:** The stadium was packed.

**Showing:** Shoulder to shoulder, students packed the bleachers. Green and gold jerseys, banners, and pom-poms lined the home side of the stadium, moving upward in unison when the crowd rose to its feet.



## **Practice**

Take one of the following statements that explains or tells about a person's feelings or behavior and demonstrate (SHOW) that feeling or behavior using action; work to make your writing as specific as possible. Choose especially revealing actions or statements that show the given meaning. Remember to use active verbs, strong adjectives and adverbs (but not too many), and sensory images.

1. He seemed to be extremely shy and lonely.
2. She is beautiful.
3. The others looked at her as though she was from another planet.
4. The class is boring.
5. She was thrilled about finally getting the thing she had dreamed of for years.
6. The puppy was excited.
7. She had the flu.
8. Then the man realized how unhappy he was.
9. I am nervous.
10. He thought his father was the most wonderful man in the world.

# Making Sense with Commas

## Working with a partner, follow these steps:

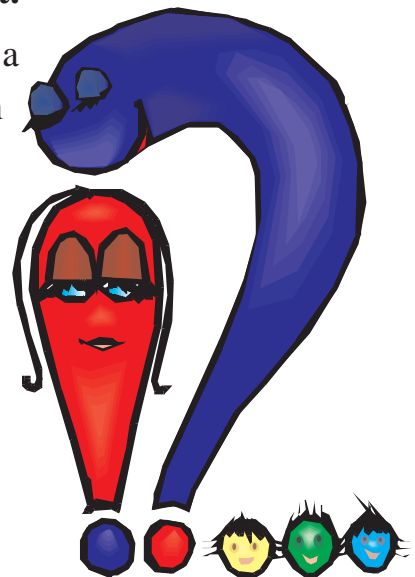
1. One person reads the passage on the next page (Sample Passage [Without Commas]) while the other person follows along. The reader should try his/her best to read through the passage fluently, pausing only for existing punctuation. He/she should not stop to reread parts of the passage in order to make sense of it.
2. Switch roles. This time the person reading the passage is allowed to pause and reread parts of the passage in order to make better sense of it. The reader should do his/her best to find the places that seem to require a pause.
3. Partners discuss how the two different reading strategies helped or hindered their ability to read and understand the passage. Next, they discuss the difficulties encountered due to the lack of commas and why commas are important. (Be prepared to share your ideas with the entire class.)

## After the class discussion:

4. Partners work through the passage, stopping to discuss correct comma placement and adding those they agree on. (Be prepared to share your ideas with the entire class.)

## After arriving at a class consensus as to comma placement:

5. Groups of four study each comma and determine a guideline for its placement. Guidelines are written down to share with the class.



## Sample Passage (Without Commas)

Sadly Isabella did not know which way to turn. The fact that she stood at a crossroad in her life was clear but her conscious knowledge of that truth did nothing to help her make a decision. The fact that she knew intellectually that she had just two choices both of which held danger maybe even death served only to increase the frozen state of indecision caused by her own fear. For a long time she stood still unable no unwilling to move either mind or body. Then calling upon a will that lay deep in her center a will saved for a soul in crisis Isabella found a flicker of her old courage a part of herself that with recent events had been driven deep inside and she used its warmth to melt the icy fear that for some time had left her lifeless unable to function as she had once functioned. Slowly Isabella awakened her courage to face the fear that consumed her choose a path and continue her journey. She willed the numbness to pass through her and she willed the warmth to comfort her. She willed life back into her consciousness her mind and her limbs. Then Isabella made her choice and she took a first step toward an unclear future.

## Sample Passage (With Commas)

Sadly, Isabella did not know which way to turn. The fact that she stood at a crossroad in her life was clear, but her conscious knowledge of that truth did nothing to help her make a decision. The fact that she knew, intellectually, that she had just two choices, both of which held danger, maybe even death, served only to increase the frozen state of indecision caused by her own fear. For a long time, she stood, still, unable, no unwilling, to move either mind or body. Then, calling upon a will that lay deep in her center, a will saved for a soul in crisis, Isabella found a flicker of her old courage, a part of herself that, with recent events, had been driven deep inside, and she used its warmth to melt the icy fear that, for some time, had left her lifeless, unable to function as she had once functioned. Slowly, Isabella awakened her courage to face the fear that consumed her, choose a path, and continue her journey. She willed the numbness to pass through her, and she willed the warmth to comfort her. She willed life back into her consciousness, her mind, and her limbs. Then, Isabella made her choice, and she took a first step toward an unclear future.

# A Quick Guide to Comma Usage

We use commas when:	Examples:
Writing, to eliminate confusion and increase clarity	<i>INCORRECT:</i> Before AVID Maria had little hope of attending college but after enrolling in the class she realized that her dream could one day become a reality. <i>CORRECT:</i> Before AVID, Maria had little hope of attending college, but after enrolling in the class, she realized that her dream could, one day, become a reality.
Writing numbers	Maria will need about \$18,500 for her first year of college.
Writing days and dates	The essay deadline is Wednesday, December 8, 2004.
Writing addresses	Maria will mail her essay to University of Washington, Office of Admissions, 1410 NE Campus Parkway, Box 355852, Seattle, Washington 98195-5852.
Indicating a person's title	She hopes to one day become Maria Gonzales, D.V.M., and establish her own veterinary clinic.
Listing three or more facts in a series	Maria planned her essay, created an initial draft, and asked several peers for feedback.
Using introductory words	Quickly, Maria wrote her initial ideas on paper.
Using introductory clauses and phrases	During the first feedback session, Maria thought of several new ideas to include in her paper.
Writing dialogue	"You must finish your second draft by Friday," said Maria's teacher. Maria raised her hand and asked, "If I have mine by tomorrow, will you look it over?" "I'd be happy to give you some quick feedback," smiled Mrs. Nelson.
Citing quotations	With wisdom, Lord Rutherford states, "We haven't the money, so we've got to think." "I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease," declared President Theodore Roosevelt, "but the doctrine of the strenuous life."
Creating a compound sentence from two simple sentences <i>A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses; the clauses are joined by using a comma with a conjunction, or by using a semicolon.</i>	<i>Sentence 1:</i> Maria thought about her essay topic. <i>Sentence 2:</i> She considered many ideas before writing a draft. <i>Compound Sentence:</i> Maria thought about her essay topic, and she considered many ideas before writing a draft. <i>Compound Sentence:</i> Maria thought about her essay topic; she considered many ideas before writing a draft.

<p>Creating complex sentences A complex sentence contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.</p>	<p><i>Complex Sentence:</i> Although Maria had always dreamed of attending the University of Washington, she ultimately decided to attend Washington State University.</p> <p><i>Complex Sentence:</i> Since she couldn't seem to make a final choice about which college to attend, Maria discussed her options with her AVID teacher, who guided her through a valuable decision-making process.</p>
<p>Creating compound/complex sentences A compound/complex sentence contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.</p>	<p>As she toured the campus, Maria discovered that Washington State University ranked among the top ten in her area of interest, so she began rethinking her life-long dream of attending the rival school across the state.</p>
<p>Showing contrast within sentences</p>	<p>As she thought about selecting Washington State University, Maria was uncertain in the beginning, confident at the end.</p>
<p>Adding commentary to sentences</p>	<p>The town of Pullman, although not a metropolis, was larger than Maria expected.</p> <p>Maria's AVID friends, incidentally, were instrumental in her decision-making process.</p>
<p>Creating transitions in sentences</p>	<p>Some of Maria's family members, however, were not supportive of her moving so far away from home.</p> <p>Maria was, nevertheless, satisfied that her final choice was the right choice.</p>
<p>Adding additional details to sentences that do not change the basic meaning of the sentence.</p>	<p>Maria, who would be the first in her family to graduate from high school, dreamed of attending college.</p> <p>Maria wrote an exemplary essay, which she sent to several universities.</p> <p>Maria, determined to overcome the financial hurdle standing between her and college, began preparing scholarship letters.</p>

**e** In English class, a phrase that adds detail but does not change the basic meaning of the sentence is called nonrestrictive. It earns this label because it does not restrict the meaning of the sentence; it simply adds interesting detail. Example: "Maria dreamed of attending college." Stating that Maria would be the first in her family to graduate from high school adds detail, but does not restrict the meaning of the basic sentence. Without the phrase, the reader still knows Maria's dream. It sometimes helps to think of commas as hooks that can lift the phrase right out of the sentence. Once the phrase is out of the sentence, ask, "Does the sentence still mean the same thing?" If the answer is "yes," then keep the commas; if the answer is "no" (indicating that the phrase is needed to help the sentence keep its intended meaning), then remove the commas.

## What Is a Thesis Statement?

A thesis statement is a clearly worded answer to a question and/or a clearly worded declaration of the view(s)/ideas a writer will substantiate, assert, or prove in a paper. It has a definite subject and an opinion. For example:

**Question/prompt:** Should our school have a dress code? Why or why not?

**Thesis:** ABC High School should have a dress code in order to reduce student anxiety about “fitting in” with the right clothes and to save families time and money shopping for clothes.

Subject = Dress code

Opinion = Should have a dress code for two reasons: reduce student anxiety and save families money.

A thesis establishes a focal point for the essay that follows. Often, audiences will anticipate a single sentence thesis, which will require you to use precise words to communicate your ideas, no matter how complex. Sometimes, you will be granted the liberty to expand intricate, complex thesis ideas into two or more sentences; doing so will enable you to more clearly state what you hope to prove. While a specific audience may determine the length of a thesis statement and its placement in the introduction of an essay, your reader will expect your thesis statement to clearly identify the argument you plan to advance in your essay.

Beyond simply defining the topic of a paper, the thesis—and by extension, the essay—should articulate an insight or position valuable enough to write about. Rather than simply setting up an essay that reiterates information already familiar to you and your reader, a strong thesis captures an insight or an approach to a topic that is unique to you and that is persuasively supported by the evidence and analysis that follow. This philosophical premise permeates the entire paper.

### Example 1

**Question/prompt:** Discuss the changes in the character of Scout in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

**Weak Thesis:** In the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, Scout changes a great deal.

**Commentary:** The question of how Scout changes—exactly what the changes are—is not addressed by the thesis. While the statement does acknowledge that Scout changes, a claim about precisely how she changes is not included. The thesis is overly general, “safe,” but not yet “strong.”

**Stronger Thesis:** In Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout develops from a naive girl, dependent upon the ideas of others to shape her view of the world to an independent thinking individual with convictions of her own.

### Example 2

**Question/prompt:** Economic development and environmental protection are often at odds. Identify and discuss one example of the conflict, including your attitude toward the conflict or a proposed solution.

**Weak Thesis:** The conflict between the logging interests of the Pacific Northwest and the protection of the spotted owl is one example of the conflict between economic development and environmental preservation.

**Commentary:** While the thesis does identify a precise example of the conflict between economics and environmentalism, as requested by the question, the thesis is not yet complete. Either the writer's stance toward the conflict or the writer's proposed solution must be included in the thesis to fully answer the question and capture the claim that the essay needs to advance.

**Stronger Thesis:** The preservation of the spotted owl pits environmentalists against loggers, serving as a microcosm of the ongoing conflict between individuals rightly committed to preserving the existence of the species that balance the ecosystem and individuals interested only in the economic and employment development of a small region of the country.

### Example 3

**Question/prompt:** Early in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet states, "What a piece of work is man," and the play itself explores a spectrum of characters who appear to embody many facets of human nature. In an essay, discuss what the play suggests about the qualities that define human nature and the implications of comparison to a society.

**Weak Thesis:** In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare suggests that human nature is defined by a mixture of qualities, some of which hurt society.

**Commentary:** The thesis is not yet precise in its response to the question, nor is it complete. The precise qualities that define human nature are not yet stated, nor are their effects on society entirely clear. How is society hurt by the qualities that comprise human nature? That portion of the claim must be included to strengthen the thesis.

**Stronger Thesis:** In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare suggests that greed and duplicity are fundamental characteristics of human nature, contributing to a society that is ill-equipped to counteract devious, self-serving individuals.

# Opening Sentence Techniques: Capturing a Reader's Attention

## Anecdote

*One way to get a reader's attention is to use an anecdote. This is a story that will interest your reader and lead to the point you want to make. Here is a sample introduction that includes an anecdote and the writer's thesis about whether or not lying is ever justifiable:*

On a cold winter evening, Mom and I were baking cookies. We were laughing and carrying on when I asked, "Mom, what would dad say if I wanted to go out with a black guy?" Mom retorted, "Don't even think about mentioning that to your father! He'll kill you! I can't imagine why you'd actually think about doing such a thing..." It was evident to me that I would be forced to keep my relationship with Andre a secret. It was at that moment I knew that my relationship with my parents would change forever. I used to believe that lying to my parents was never acceptable. However, now, I strongly believe lying is justified to protect or support your belief system.

## Dialogue or Quotation Related to Topic

*Another way to get a reader's attention is to use dialogue or a quotation that will interest your reader and lead to the point you want to make. When you use a quotation from the text about which you are writing, be sure to include the speaker and the circumstance somewhere in a follow up sentence so your reader understands the use of the quotation. When you use dialogue, you indent each time another person speaks. Dialogue should bring out the speaker's true voice in order to sound as authentic as possible. Here is a sample introduction that includes dialogue:*

"I can't believe I failed my English class! What am I going to tell my parents?"

"Linda, just hide your report card and tell them that you lost it."

While I value my friendship with my best friend, I no longer value her advice when it comes to my grades. Brenda's words haunt me as I replay the events of the last week. It seemed so easy; just tell my parents I lost my report card. How could such a simple lie turn into such horrible drama?

## Startling Information

*A third way to get a reader's attention is to use startling information that will interest your reader and lead to the point you want to make. This could be an incident, a statistic, or a "sound." Here is a sample introduction that includes a startling opener:*

Brrrring! Brrrring! The telephone startled me out of my sleep at 11:30 p.m. My mother and I both picked up the phone at the same time. Unknown to her, I listened to the man's voice which casually, without emotion, described my father's fatal accident. After a few seconds of cold silence, I heard the phone crash to the floor as my mother's screams pierced the house. My body instantly filled up with intense fear.

## Opinion

*A fourth way to get a reader's attention is to write an all-commentary introduction that will interest your reader and lead to the point you want to make. Here is a sample introduction that uses opinion:*

Like so many homeless teens, Roger, in the story "Thank You Ma'am," was never taught right from wrong. Not having a parent around to teach a child love and respect causes a kid to grow up with no moral consciousness; this, in fact, was Roger's greatest flaw. Roger consequently makes a bad decision to steal Mrs. Jones's purse. However, little does he know that his run-in with her would change his life forever.

## Controversial or Provocative Question

*A fifth way to get a reader's attention is to pose a question that you know will inspire disagreement or at least curiosity. Here is a sample introduction that uses a question:*

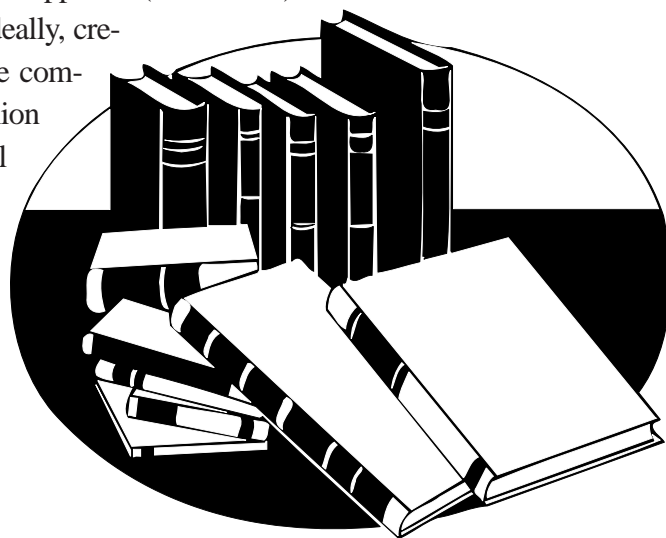
Are you a liar? Are we all liars? Can you honestly say that you have never lied? Can any of us? Such questions remind us that morality and ethics are not black and white; there is a lot of gray area in how we interpret what is right and what is wrong. It is in hindsight that I ponder these questions as I sit in my room eeking out the final days of my restriction for, you guessed it, lying! With this hindsight I have learned that lying to protect myself from consequences I actually deserve is much different than lying to maintain a belief system that will be compromised if I tell the truth. I used to believe that lying to my parents was never acceptable. However, now, I strongly believe lying is justified to protect or support my belief system.

## Definition

*Still another way to get a reader's attention is to start with a definition, especially if your topic is centered on a key term or concept that is complex or unique. Here is a sample introduction that uses definition:*

To understand the intricacies of the rise and fall of communism in the Soviet Union, one must first understand Karl Marx's perspective of communism. Before the Russian Revolution began, Marx encouraged workers to revolt against the noble classes and to start a communist society. A communist society is a system without a government and social classes. Marx suggested that "after classes had been eliminated, everyone would live in peace, prosperity, and freedom. There would be no more need for governments, police, or armies, and all these institutions would gradually disappear." (Urban 890)

Given this definition, the revolution should have, ideally, created equality and economic security. However, true communism was never fully achieved in the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution because of the brutal and harsh dictatorship of Joseph Stalin.



# What Is an Introduction?

Whether a single paragraph—as some audiences will request—or more, an introduction has many purposes. It should:

- Capture the reader’s attention and keep it, through the use of interesting, unique, or creative words and ideas.
- Set a tone and communicate information that will help the reader understand the purpose of the paper.
- Provide general background information the reader may need in order to understand the thesis.
- Assert a thesis which provides focus and direction for readers.
- Indicate what is to follow in the body of the essay.

A common way to represent a typical introduction is through an upside down triangle, with the wide end of the triangle representing *general* information and the narrow end representing *specific* information:

**Opening Sentences** that “hook” the reader, establish tone, and provide background information about the topic.

**A Thesis** that establishes a focus for the paper, a position to be proven.

**A Forecast** that indicates what is to follow.

## Opening Sentences

As revealed in the diagram above, opening sentences “hook” the reader, establish the tone, and provide background. Given this model, your first concern as a writer should be to capture the attention of your reader—to “hook” your reader into your paper and make him/her want to read it. For ideas about how to accomplish this, see Student Handout 4.11a (“Opening Sentence Techniques: Capturing a Reader’s Attention”).

In addition to capturing your reader’s attention, the opening sentences of your essay should set a tone and communicate information that will help your reader understand the purpose of the paper. To accomplish this, you might consider following your “hook” with information about the general topic and then narrowing the ideas toward your precise topic. For example:

- The opening sentences of an essay about the effects of a lightning-induced brush fire on a particular stretch of land might include the broad observation that nature produces cycles of destruction that lead to renewal.

- The opening sentences of an essay about the effects of Caesar Chavez’s hunger strikes on the unionizing efforts of the United Farm Workers might include a statement about the power of individual actions to shape social change.
- The opening sentences of an autobiographical essay about how you came to appreciate your brother’s humor might include a broad observation that we often misunderstand or misjudge people when we use, as a basis for our judgment, our reactions to their humor.
- The opening sentences of a biographical essay about a local artist might include an explanation of the role artists play in communities.

As you craft your introduction and work to include general topic information, remember that your reader will stay more engaged if you use interesting, unique, or creative ideas rather than clichés and generalizations. Essays that begin with phrases like, “Throughout history, there have been conflicts...” or “Science helps us understand the world...” or “According to Webster’s Dictionary...” don’t get much mileage toward developing a topic or capturing the reader’s interest.

In addition to engaging your reader, the opening sentences should provide some detailed background information about the subject of the essay. Including this type of information provides a smooth, natural progression, or movement, from the general topic to your specific thesis. Using the same essay examples listed above, the following might be included as background information:

- Brush fire essay: background information might include facts about how many times the land has been burned and/or facts about the most recent burn.
- Caesar Chavez essay: background information might include how and why Caesar Chavez became involved with the United Farm Workers and undertook hunger strikes as a means of protest.
- Autobiographical essay: background information might include your brother’s name and a few significant lines of a joke (or jokes) he told and your initial reactions of impatience and disgust.
- Biographical essay: background information might include the author’s name and age and some enticing facts about how many shows she has had and which art pieces are prominently displayed in the community.

As the opening sentences lead toward your thesis, a common understanding should start to emerge between you and your reader. Your reader should have a sense of what you’re trying to prove and how it is related to more general background information.

## **Thesis**

A thesis statement is a clearly worded answer to a question and/or a clearly worded declaration of the view(s)/ideas you will substantiate, assert, or prove in your paper. It has a definite subject and an opinion. For example:

**Thesis:** Artist Dorothy Hahn has been a vital member of the Carlsbad community and has contributed to the intellectual and aesthetic well-being of its citizens.

Subject            =        Dorothy Hahn

Opinion            =        Has been a vital member of our community and has contributed to our well-being.

Often, audiences will anticipate a single sentence thesis, which will require you to use precise words to communicate your ideas, no matter how complex. Sometimes, you will be granted the liberty to expand intricate, complex thesis ideas into two or more sentences; doing so will enable you to more clearly state what you

hope to prove. While a specific audience may determine the length of a thesis statement and its placement in the introduction of an essay, your reader will expect your thesis statement to clearly identify the argument you plan to advance in your essay.

Your thesis—and by extension, your essay—should articulate an insight or position valuable enough to write about. You should not assert a position that is already accepted as true by you and your reader—why would you need to prove such a statement? A strong thesis captures your unique insight or approach to a topic and is persuasively supported by the evidence and analysis that follow in the paper.

## **Forecast**

A forecast statement lays out the subtopics/subdivisions of support that will follow in your essay and does so in the order in which they will appear. Although you may decide to edit out your forecast statement in the final stages of the writing process, including an orderly forecast, early on, can assist you as you are feeling your way along in the organizational scheme and planning the direction of your proof. If left in your paper, a well-stated forecast can aid your reader in anticipating the direction your essay will take and help him/her to follow your logic and reasoning. An essay proving the claim that Dorothy Hahn has been a vital member of the community might include a forecast such as:

**Forecast:** She has used her art to create natural gathering places and to inspire further personal expression. She has also used her artwork as a tool for social commentary, helping us to consider our opinions about important topics of the day.

This forecast tells the reader that the essay will first talk about the impact Dorothy Hahn has had on the community by establishing gathering places for people and ways for people to express themselves. Secondly, the essay will talk about how she has used her art to express her opinions about socially relevant topics.

Your forecast should not be overly detailed or awkward: it should simply notify your reader, in a concise and manageable statement, of what is to come.

## **A Complete Introduction**

Using the examples above, a complete introduction to a biography about Dorothy Hahn might read like this:

Lewis Mumford suggests that “the artist has a special task; that of reminding men of their humanity and the promise of their creativity.” If Mumford’s words are true, then artists play an important role in their communities, inspiring creativity and connecting citizens to their own humanity. Local artist Dorothy Hahn has risen to this “special task.” The 63-year-old artist is being remembered this month in a special tribute and gallery display hosted by the Downtown Art Gallery. An artist for over 40 years, Hahn has spent most of her life creating art in the Carlsbad community. Over the years, she has had ten shows at various local galleries, created the annual KidsART program that runs every August, and secured prominent homes for her sculptures and mobiles in most of the city’s public buildings and recreational facilities. Dorothy Hahn has been a vital member of the Carlsbad community and has contributed to the intellectual and aesthetic well-being of its citizens. She has used her art to create natural gathering places and to inspire further personal expression. She has also used her artwork as a tool for social commentary, helping us to consider our opinions about important topics of the day.

## Common Transitional Words and Phrases

### Ways to transition between opening sentences and the thesis:

This (situation, story, case) illustrates the point that ...

This (situation, story, case) is an example of today's problem of ...

As in the above situation, I believe ...

Although some people believe \_\_\_\_\_, I think ...

In a similar way ...

In view of this ...

Today ...

### Ways to transition between body paragraphs:

One of the most important reasons why ... is ...

Another point is ...

Similarly ...

Also ...

Moreover ...

Likewise ...

In addition ...

Furthermore ...

Another example of this is ...

Besides ...

In fact ...

In other words ...

Next ...

Nevertheless ...

On the other hand ...

However ...

Consequently ...

### Ways to transition from body paragraphs to the conclusion:

All things considered ...

Finally ...

To sum up ...

Thus ...

As a result ...

Obviously ...

In conclusion ...

Lastly ...

It becomes clear that ...

Therefore, in summary ...

Clearly ...

From this we see ...

**Listed below are words you can use to show:**

***Support***

as an example, for example, further, furthermore, similarly, also, for instance, as shown by

***Main Points***

and most important, a major development, there are three reasons why, remember that, now this is important

***Contrast***

on the one hand/on the other hand, on the contrary, in contrast, however, yet, still, nevertheless, not withstanding, for all that, by contrast, at the same time, although, while, a different view, in spite of, despite

***Addition***

one, another, similarly, moreover, furthermore, in addition, too, equally important, next, finally, first, second, third, besides, likewise, in the same way

***Comparison***

similarly, likewise, in like manner, both, each, in the same way

***Conclusion***

therefore, thus, then, consequently, as a consequence, as a result, accordingly, finally, for this (these) reason(s), on that account, because of, under these conditions, since

***Explanation***

for example, to illustrate, by way of illustration, to be specific, specifically, in particular, thus, for instance, in other words

***Concession***

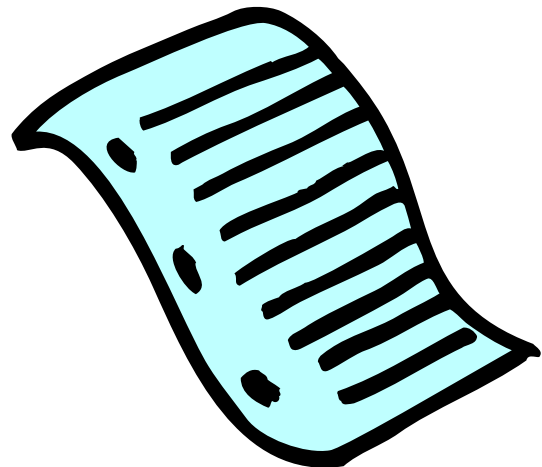
naturally, granted, of course, to be sure, although, despite, in spite of, notwithstanding, for all, while

***Time***

when, immediately, upon, since, first, earlier, meanwhile, at the same time, in the meantime, soon afterward, subsequently, later

***Summation, Repetition, Intensification***

to sum up, in brief, in short, in fact, indeed, in other words



# Transition Worksheet

## Functions of Transition Words

**S**entences written in sequence are held together by chains of meaning. Those chains take definite forms that can be expressed by transition words and phrases. The following chart lists transition words and phrases grouped according to the specific idea or relationship that each word or phrase expresses. Study the list, and then do the exercises that follow.

Relationship Expressed	Transition Word or Phrase
Add another thought or emphasize a thought	<i>besides, also, what's more, furthermore, in addition, again</i>
Arrange ideas in order of time, space, importance	<i>first, next, then, finally, meanwhile, later, afterward, eventually, nearly, above, below, in front of, beyond, to the left, to the right</i>
Connect contrasting or opposite ideas	<i>still, however, on the one hand, on the other hand, yet, nevertheless, rather, on the contrary</i>
Add an illustration or explanation to an idea	<i>for example, for instance, in other words, specifically</i>
Show that one idea is a consequence or result of another idea	<i>so, therefore, consequently, accordingly</i>
Show that one idea is an exception to another idea	<i>of course, though, to be sure</i>
Show one idea as a summary of another idea	<i>in short, in brief, to sum up</i>
Show similarity between ideas	<i>in the same way, similarly, likewise</i>

### Exercise 1

From the parentheses following each pair of sentences, choose the transition word or phrase that best expresses the chain of meaning between the two sentences. Write your choice in the blank.

- Would you like to start collecting stamps? \_\_\_\_\_, go to the library and take out a beginner's book on the hobby. (**Consequently, In brief, First**)
- When you are first learning to play any musical instrument, the task seems hopeless. \_\_\_\_\_, as you continue to practice you begin to see yourself make steady progress. (**However, Besides, Accordingly**)
- She is an excellent swimmer. \_\_\_\_\_, she is a fine all-round athlete. (**Indeed, Nevertheless, Accordingly**)
- Let the sauce simmer in the pan for at least an hour. You can begin, \_\_\_\_\_, to prepare the meat. (**above, on the other hand, meanwhile**)

5. Most people didn't like the new styles that the manufacturers were introducing. \_\_\_\_\_, prices for clothing had simply gotten too high. **(For example, So, Besides)**
6. Professional athletes can have enormous incomes. Nancy Lopez, \_\_\_\_\_, earned over one hundred thousand dollars in her rookie year as a golf pro. **(for example, so, besides)**
7. Because of carefully planned efforts, we are now waging a successful fight against damage to the environment. \_\_\_\_\_ we see that we can begin to solve our problems if we have the will. **(Therefore, Again, After)**
8. Angela was talented in math and science. Her sister, \_\_\_\_\_, was interested in golf and tennis. **(to be sure, on the other hand, consequently)**
9. Most basketball players are well above six feet tall. \_\_\_\_\_, there are some notable exceptions. **(To be sure, In fact, Eventually)**
10. The city itself lies in a valley. \_\_\_\_\_, the mountains can be seen rising majestically. **(Yet, Below, Beyond)**
11. The health dangers of cigarette smoking have been proved beyond a doubt. \_\_\_\_\_, people who continue to smoke are deliberately committing slow suicide. **(Also, In other words, Finally)**
12. Conservation measures seem to be the only short-range answer to the energy problem. Such measures, \_\_\_\_\_, will merely postpone the day of reckoning, the day when there simply is no more oil or coal or gas. **(consequently, however, moreover)**
13. Some scientists think that items not now considered eatable will one day form an important part of our diet. \_\_\_\_\_, seaweed will appear on restaurant menus. **(For instance, Besides, In the same way)**

## **Exercise 2**

Select a sentence or two from above, and develop a complete paragraph, paying close attention to transition words as you move from idea to idea.

## Alternatives to “Says”

**W**hen adding a quotation to your work, it is easy to use the word “says” as the introduction to the speaker’s/writer’s words. For example, Mr. Magoo says, “There is no other time to laugh but now!” Academic writing, however, often uses substitutes for the word “says” to introduce a quotation. For example, Mr. Magoo maintains that “There is no other time to laugh but now!” Here are some other examples (in alphabetical order):

- argues
- asserts
- concludes
- contends
- discusses
- emphasizes
- examines
- explores
- focuses on
- has determined that
- highlights the fact that
- maintains
- mentions
- notes
- points out that
- reports
- states
- suggests



## How to Integrate Quotations

**A**s you explain or argue your points in writing, you will frequently quote the spoken or written words of others as a means of presenting evidence. One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of the words and ideas from other sources to support your own points. The quotation is especially useful to argument. By using solid evidence, you are proving that you know your subject well and are not presenting superficial ideas. Three ways to include words and ideas from sources include:

### Using a Direct Quotation

Jeremy Rifkin says, “Studies on pigs’ social behavior funded by McDonald’s at Purdue University, for example, have found that they crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other” (15).

*Notice that the writer starts with the author’s name and “says” as an introduction to the quotation. The quotation is followed by the page number in parentheses (called a parenthetical reference). This page number signals to the reader where he/she can find the quotation in the article being cited. In this case, the writer is using only one source and cites the author’s name in the introduction to the quotation, so he/she only needs to include the page number in the parentheses. Had the writer not used the author’s name or had the writer used multiple sources for his/her essay, he/she would have included the first word of the citation from his/her “Works Cited” page and the page number in the parentheses; for example, (Rifkin 15). Here’s the same example above without the author’s name and an expanded parenthetical reference:*

It has been found, in “studies on pigs’ social behavior funded by McDonald’s at Purdue University...that [pigs] crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other” (Rifkin 15).

*Notice that the author’s name appears at the end in the parenthetical reference. Also notice that this direct quotation is blended with the writer’s own sentence. The ellipsis (...) shows that there are portions of the original quotation left out. The brackets [pigs] indicate where the writer inserted his/her own word that was not part of the original quotation by Rifkin. Using these methods, the writer has more flexibility with how he/she integrates direct quotations into his/her writing.*

### Paraphrasing a Quotation

In *A Change of Heart about Animals*, Jeremy Rifkin notes that McDonald’s has funded studies on pigs that show that they need affection and playtime with one another (15).

*Notice that the writer starts with the article name and author but then puts the information from the article into his/her own words, using some of the author’s original words, but placing them in his/her own structure (McDonald’s, affection, playtime). The writer does not directly quote the article, so there is no need for quotation marks. The writer still cites his/her source by including a parenthetical reference to signal the reader where this point originates.*

### Summarizing a Quotation

In *A Change of Heart about Animals*, Jeremy Rifkin cites study after study to show that animals and humans are more alike than we think. He shows that animals feel emotions, reason, make and use tools, learn and use language, and mourn their dead. One study even shows that pigs need affection and playtime with one another, and enjoy playing with toys (15).

*Notice that the writer starts with the article name and author but then summarizes the main points of the author in his/her own words. This summary includes more information than the paraphrase as the writer summarizes some of the background information to better understand the point about pigs needing affection and playtime. The writer still cites his/her source by including a parenthetical reference to signal the reader where this point originates.*

## Cite Sources of Quotations

All quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of someone else's words need documentation in the text to show the original source. Typical MLA style is to use parenthetical references within the text (as shown above) and to include a "Works Cited" page at the end of the essay. The information on this handout provides basic information about how to use parenthetical references, but you should use a handbook with MLA guidelines for details on how to create a "Works Cited" page and how to quote specific material (poetry or plays and long quotations, for example).

## Tips for Using Quotations

### *Make Quotations Natural*

Blend quotations smoothly into your own writing. Do not simply drop a quotation into your paper and hope it fits. An irrelevant quotation is worse than no quotation at all. That means you need to "surround" your quotation with your own words to give it a "home." Try to make the quotation fit in as if you had written it yourself as part of your paper. In the best writing, quotations are integrated so well that they sound as if they are not quotations at all.

### *Support Quotations*

Introduce the quotation in your own words, state the quotation, explain what the quotation means or implies, and then explain how it supports the idea being proven in that paragraph (which means you are connecting it back to your thesis as well). Be sure to include a correct citation of the source, as suggested above.

*Notice that the writer introduces the quotation by giving context or background: Borich (the author being quoted) uses research from other people to support his point. The essay writer includes reference to the original research and to the author she is quoting as she introduces the quotation. She smoothly blends the direct quotation into the passage, offering a parenthetical page citation, and clarifies what the quotation means. Finally, the writer links the quotation to her thesis and explains how it supports that idea.*

### ***Example of direct quotation in the beginning of a paragraph (from an essay about effective teaching strategies):***

Regarding research by Evertson and Emmer, Borich states, "Effective teachers attached assignments directly to the end of an in-class activity, avoiding awkward pauses or even the need for a transition. The assignment appeared to students as a logical extension of what was already taking place" (128). The timing of assignments, then, contributes to their effectiveness; if assignments are linked together naturally, then students are more likely to see the relevance. In my observation of this teacher, the homework assignments do immediately follow the lessons to which they pertain. They mimic the types of activities and discussions (as noted on agenda) that students were engaged in less than 20 minutes prior. The students are actively engaged in preparing for their homework and they seem to understand its purpose.

*Same example with parts labeled:*

**INTRODUCE DIRECT QUOTATION:** Regarding research by Evertson and Emmer, Borich states, **STATE DIRECT QUOTATION:** “Effective teachers attached assignments directly to the end of an in-class activity, avoiding awkward pauses or even the need for a transition. The assignment appeared to students as a logical extension of what was already taking place” (128). **EXPLAIN WHAT THE QUOTATION MEANS:** The timing of assignments, then, contributes to their effectiveness; if assignments are linked together naturally, then students are more likely to see the relevance. **SHOW HOW IT SUPPORTS THE MAIN POINT (THESIS):** In my observation of this teacher, the homework assignments do immediately follow the lessons to which they pertain. They mimic the types of activities and discussions (as noted on agenda) that students were engaged in less than 20 minutes prior.

*Example of direct quotation in the middle of a paragraph (from an essay about effective teaching strategies):*

In previous observations, I have heard many students refer to homework assignments as “stupid.” If a student does not see the value in doing an assignment, he or she is less likely to follow through with the work. A student may put little effort into “stupid” assignments. As Borich states, “Explanations [of homework assignments] are important if anything other than a mechanical or begrudging response is expected” (128). He suggests that it is incumbent upon the teacher to insure student engagement by making sure the explanation of homework is clear and relevant. In this situation, when a student comments on what seems to him a large amount of homework, the teacher is quick to point out the relevance of the assignments. She shows the class how the homework is an extension of what they have been learning in class. Continuing to send the message that the most important point of the homework is student learning, the teacher also invites the students to offer suggestions for adapting the homework to be more effective. No one takes her up on her offer.

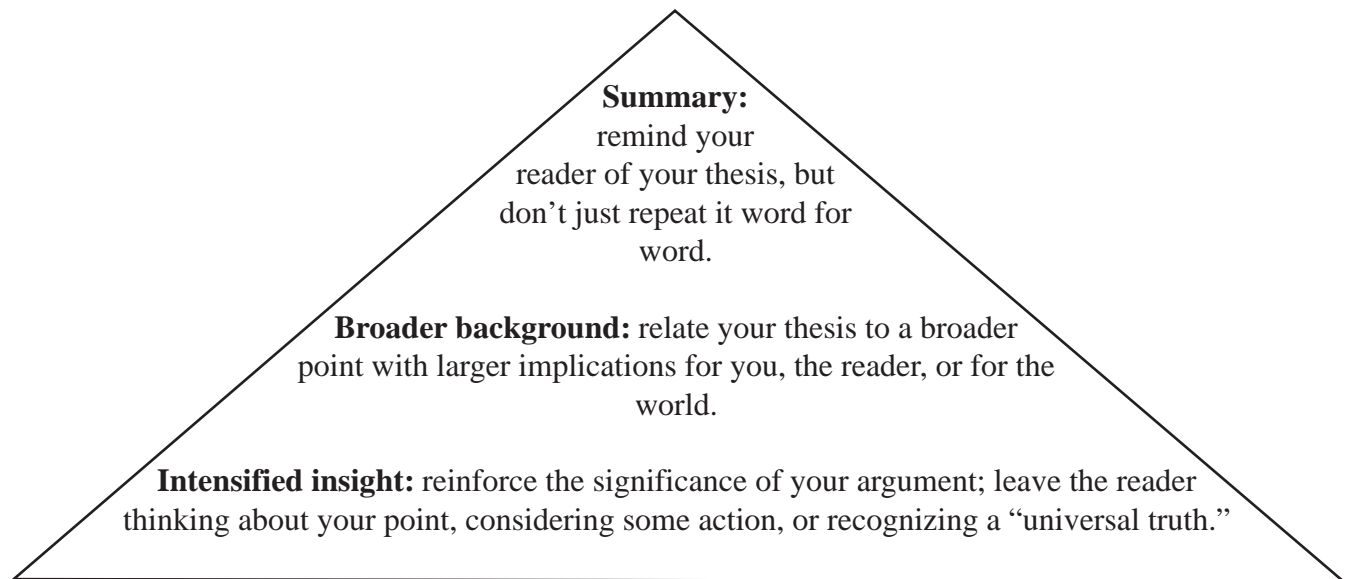
*In addition to accomplishing the above requirements, notice that the writer offers a more expanded introduction to the quote by referring to personal experience and offering commentary on that experience before introducing the quotation from Borich. Notice that the writer inserts some of her own words into the quotation by using brackets [ ].*

*Same example with parts labeled:*

**INTRODUCE DIRECT QUOTATION:** In previous observations, I have heard many students refer to homework assignments as “stupid.” If a student does not see the value in doing an assignment, he or she is less likely to follow through with the work. A student may put little effort into “stupid” assignments. **STATE DIRECT QUOTATION:** As Borich states, “Explanations [of homework assignments] are important if anything other than a mechanical or begrudging response is expected” (128). **EXPLAIN WHAT THE QUOTATION MEANS:** He suggests that it is incumbent upon the teacher to insure student engagement by making sure the explanation of homework is clear and relevant. **SHOW HOW IT SUPPORTS THE MAIN POINT (THESIS):** In this situation, when a student comments on what seems to him a large amount of homework, the teacher is quick to point out the relevance of the assignments. She shows the class how the homework is an extension of what they have been learning in class. Continuing to send the message that the most important point of the homework is student learning, the teacher also invites the students to offer suggestions for adapting the homework to be more effective. No one takes her up on her offer.

## What Is a Conclusion?

**I**n the concluding paragraph, you wrap things up and leave your reader with something to think about. It is the place to say “good-bye” gracefully. A common way to represent a conclusion is to invert the introduction triangle so the narrow end, representing your specific focal point (your thesis), is on top and the wide end, representing significant implications to the greater society, is at the bottom.



While the introduction is the place to hook your reader, establish a tone and background knowledge, and assert your point, the conclusion is the place to reinforce your point and help the reader to understand why it matters in the grand scheme of things (answering the “so what?”).

It is often effective to create a “circle” between your introduction and conclusion—a circle that connects the conclusion back to where you started in the introduction. For example, if you introduce a powerful image or metaphor in the introduction, continue with the image or metaphor in the conclusion. If you start with a quotation or dialogue in the introduction, revisit it again in the conclusion by extending it, paraphrasing it, or using part of it again. The reader experiences a sense of coherence when you tie the conclusion back to the introduction.

## Closing Sentence Techniques: Leaving a Reader Fulfilled

**A** good conclusion wraps up an essay in a memorable and powerful way. In doing so, a strong conclusion reminds readers of the gist of the essay and leaves them feeling that they know a good deal more than when they began. Effective strategies for concluding an essay include vivid images, quotations, and calls for action.

### Concluding With a Vivid Image

It is, in any case, finally that I end up having to trust not to laugh, not to snicker. Even as you regard me in these lines, I try to imagine your face as you read. You who read “Aria,” especially those of you with your theme-divining yellow felt pen poised in your hand, you for whom this essay is yet another “assignment,” please do not forget that it is my life I am handing you in these pages—memories that are as personal for me as family photographs in an old cigar box.

—RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

from a postscript to *Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood*

### Concluding With a Quotation

Despite the celebrity that accrued to her and the air of awesomeness with which she was surrounded in her later years, Miss Keller retained an unaffected personality, certain that her optimistic attitude toward life was justified. “I believe that all through these dark and silent years God has been using my life for a purpose I do not know,” she said. “But one day I shall understand and then I will be satisfied.”

—ALDEN WHITMAN

*Helen Keller: June 27, 1880–June 1, 1968*

### Concluding With a Call for Action

It is now almost 40 years since the invention of nuclear weapons. We have not yet experienced a global thermonuclear war—although on more than one occasion we have come tremulously close. I do not think our luck can hold forever. Men and machines are fallible, as recent events remind us. Fools and madmen do exist, and sometimes rise to power. Concentrating always on the near future, we have ignored the long-term consequences of our actions. We have placed our civilization and species in jeopardy.

Fortunately, it is not yet too late. We can safeguard the planetary civilization and the human family if we so choose. There is no more important or urgent issue.

—CARL SAGAN

*The Nuclear Winter*

The concluding paragraph provides the last opportunity for you to impress the message of an essay on your readers’ minds and to create effects you desire. As such, it is well worth your time and effort.

## Sample Conclusions

### Sample 1

**THESIS:** I may or may not get married some day, but that’s a decision for me—and my potential partner—to make. I have the freedom to choose, and I can’t understand why any of my fellow citizens would be denied that same freedom.

**CONCLUSION:** “The contract of marriage is most solemn and is not to be entered into lightly,” I told each couple, reading the introductory remarks for all city-hall weddings. But they all had known that long before I told them. “You’ve restored my faith in the institution of marriage,” I told two beautiful, beaming women after I had proclaimed them spouses for life.

(By Sean Captain, “Proud Bachelor Turned Marrying Man—Sort Of,” *Newsweek*, March 8, 2004)

### Sample 2

**THESIS:** In my family, living with five siblings proved to be a hands-on educational experience.

**CONCLUSION:** It will be my turn to move on and leave home next year, and I imagine our experiences will help me survive and succeed out in the real world. After all, though the sophisticated lessons provided us with an undeniable edge at school, our home-school experiences ultimately provided us with much more than decent grades. Our full house brought out the very best in us, as we transformed perceived disadvantages of our family’s size into gifts, building creativity, tolerance, and self-confidence.

We were just lucky, I guess.

(By Jane Chong, “Making a Full House an Educational Experience,” “My Turn” essay contest, 2004)

### Sample 3

**THESIS:** Fortunately, it’s the federal standards and state MCAS test that are inadequate, not Brookline’s schools.

**CONCLUSION:** My guess is the School Committee majority will avoid an unambiguous response. The state legislature remains a lost cause. Federal honchos like our own senators Ted Kennedy and John Kerry, who helped George Bush pass ESEA despite its inherent problems, still don’t admit they were wrong. Only parents, students, and teachers can lead the way from capitulation to resistance.

(By Dennis Fox, *Leaving Children Behind Locally*, published online: [www.dennisfox.net](http://www.dennisfox.net), February 26, 2004)

### Sample 4

**THESIS:** This past month a disproportionate number of headlines have revolved around anthrax. Is our fear of anthrax fact based or media created?

**CONCLUSION:** Franklin Roosevelt said it best when he said we have nothing to fear except fear itself. Where is the headline that reads 285 million people in the United States *don’t* have anthrax and 668 million pieces of mail get delivered *safely* every day (McQuaid)? The media is feeding us fear dressed in the costume of news. Just as our government has an obligation to protect our freedom, the media has a responsibility to report morally. When it doesn’t, we the consumers need to differentiate between fact and media manipulation.

(By Jeni Cormano, student writer)

# Options for Tracking Sources and Taking Notes

**A**s you do research for your paper, you will need to keep close track of your sources and take accurate notes. The options below represent just three possibilities. Try each one with a different paper and decide which works best for you. With the approval of your teacher, adapt these methods to suit your needs. Your goal should be to expand your repertoire so that you have many options from which to choose in future academic settings.

**e** Any of the options presented below can be adapted to fit computer technology. Many students find it quicker to type than write notes; many students like to keep their sources and notes in computer databases so they can easily cut and paste information during the writing process. You may want to explore this turf!

## 1. Cornell Note Format:

- Begin a new page for each source. If you need more pages as you take notes, simply staple on additional pages.
- Fill in the top part of your notes as usual.
- Enter the type of source. For example: book, magazine, interview, Web page, etc.
- Enter where you found this source, including any information that may be helpful if you need to relocate it. *For example:* name of library, floor, section, call number. Information will vary according to the type of source.
- Enter the information required for your “Works Cited” page. If you are unsure about the specifics of this type of source, look it up in a MLA style book. Be sure to use the format that is required for your “Works Cited” page, including all punctuation.
- Using your notetaking skills, write the direct quotation/paraphrase/summary on the right side of the paper. Using proper MLA format, indicate the page number and any other information you may need.
- In the questions/main idea column, formulate a question for the information recorded, and indicate if it is a direct quotation (DQ), a paraphrase (P), or a summary (S).
- Store your notes in a three-ring binder.
- Advantages: Familiar, encourages inquiry; notes and sources are together; plenty of room to take good notes; easy to alphabetize sources.
- Disadvantages: Takes lots of paper; may be inconvenient to carry around a binder.

## Sample:

<b>CLASS NOTES</b> Topic: _____	Name: _____ Class: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____
<b>Questions/Main Ideas:</b> What type of source is this?	book
Where did I find this source?	San Diego State University, Love Library, 4th floor; CE 368.21, H 24, 2003
What is my source?	Haily, Nan. <u>Choosing the Right College</u> . New York: Phantom Rider Press, 2003.
<b>NOTE 1:</b> How do I begin the process of researching a college? (DQ)	“Effective selection of a college begins with careful and deliberate research, based on identified priorities” (133).
<b>NOTE 2:</b> How can I begin to set my priorities for choosing a school? (P)	Nan Hailey suggests that students make the identification of priorities a “family affair.” Her vision is that the whole process of college selection should begin with a special meeting—a meeting where as many family members as possible join together to brainstorm both personal and family priorities in the selection of a college for the individual in question (137).

## 2. Note Card Format:

- Use a separate card for each source. (Many students prefer the 4 x 6 vs. 3 x 5 cards because they afford more room for recording information.)
- Create a bibliography card. On the front of the card, enter the information required for your “Works Cited” page. If you are unsure about the specifics of this type of source, look it up in a MLA style book. Be sure to use the format that is required for your “Works Cited” page, including all punctuation.
- On the back of the card, enter the type of source and where you found it.
- Using a separate note card for each entry, copy the direct quotation/paraphrase/summary. Indicate if it is a direct quotation (DQ), a paraphrase (P), or a summary (S). Using proper MLA format, indicate the page number and any other information you may need. Place the author’s name on the card, and add a sub-topic that is appropriate for the information given.
- Store your note cards in a file box. Alphabetize all bibliography cards by author or by title if author is unknown. Place all note cards behind their appropriate source.
- Advantages: Easy to arrange and rearrange cards while writing; easy to alphabetize sources; easy to carry around cards while doing research
- Disadvantages: Not as much room to write notes; source information is separate from the notes; cards can get out of order.

### Sample Bibliography Card: Side 1

Hailey, Nan. Choosing the Right College.  
New York: Phantom Rider Press,  
2003.

### Sample Bibliography Card: Side 2

Book	San Diego State University
CE 368.21	Love Library, 4th floor
H 24	
2003	

### Sample Note Card: Direct Quotation

<p>Selecting a College</p> <p>“Effective selection of a college begins with careful and deliberate research, based on identified priorities” (133).</p> <p>Hailey, Nan</p>	<p>DQ</p>
--	-----------

### Sample Note Card: Paraphrase

Selecting a College P

Nan Hailey suggests that students make the identification of priorities a “family affair.” Her vision is that the whole process of college selection should begin with a special meeting—a meeting where as many family members as possible join together to brainstorm both personal and family priorities in the selection of a college for the individual in question (137).

Hailey, Nan

### 3. Commentary Format:

- Begin a new page for each source. If you need more pages as you take notes, simply staple on additional pages.
- Divide the paper into two columns; label the right column “commentary.”
- On the top line, enter the information required for your “Works Cited” page. If you are unsure about the specifics of this type of source, look it up in a MLA style book. Be sure to use the format that is required for your “Works Cited” page, including all punctuation.
- On the second line, enter the type of source. For example: book, magazine, interview, Web page, etc.
- Next, enter where you found this source, including any information that may be helpful if you need to relocate it. For example: name of library, floor, section, call number. Information will vary according to the type of source.
- Using your notetaking skills, write in the direct quotation/paraphrase/summary. Indicate if it is a direct quotation (DQ), a paraphrase (P), or a summary (S). Using proper MLA format, indicate the page number and any other information you may need.
- In the commentary column, record your thoughts, reactions, ideas, etc. relating to the note.
- Store your notes in a three-ring binder.
- Advantages: encourages interaction with notes; notes and sources are together; plenty of room to take good notes; easy to alphabetize sources
- Disadvantages: Takes lots of paper; may be inconvenient to carry around a binder

### Sample:

<b>Source:</b> Haily, Nan. Choosing the Right College. New York: Phantom Rider Press, 2003.	<b>Commentary:</b>
<b>Type:</b> Book	
<b>Location:</b> San Diego State University, Love Library, 4th floor	
CE 368.21	
H 24	
2003	
<b>NOTE 1:</b> “Effective selection of a college begins with careful and deliberate research, based on identified priorities” (133).	Nan Hailey repeats similar ideas to Bob Peters. I need to
(DQ)	include both of these
	perspectives together in my
<b>NOTE 2:</b> Nan Hailey suggests that students make the identification of priorities a “family affair.” Her vision is	paper. This reinforces what
that the whole process of college selection should begin with a	most teenagers know to be
special meeting—a meeting where as many family members	true.
as possible join together to brainstorm both personal and	
family priorities in the selection of a college for the	
individual in question (137). (P)	

## Crediting Sources Within Your Text

**W**hile writing your paper, use parentheses to credit direct quotations, paraphrased material, and summarized information. MLA style makes this task quite simple. Although these basics will get you started, you will, at some point, need to access a current style manual to get more specialized information.

- **Author's name used in text:** If you use the author's name as you introduce the material, you need only put the page number in parentheses, after the quotation marks and followed by a period.

*Example:*

Hailey states that the "effective selection of a college begins with careful and deliberate research, based on identified priorities" (133).

- **Author's name used in parentheses:** If you do not include the author's name as you introduce the material, you need to include it in parentheses, along with the page number. The parenthetical reference is placed after the quotation marks. Add a period after the parentheses.

*Example:*

It has been suggested that "a majority of students who ignore the research process of selecting a college end up dissatisfied with their choice and eventually drop out" (Hailey 142).

- **Author unknown:** If the author of the material is unknown, then you need to reference the work by title. If the title is short, use it in its entirety; if it is long, offer a brief version. As with other citations, the parenthetical reference follows the quotation marks, and the period follows the parentheses.

*Example:*

According to one source, "scholarship money is unfairly distributed, often going to students whose parents know how to work the system" ("Scholarship Scandals" 41).

- **Multiple authors:** If your information has multiple authors, list all of them, by last name, in the text, or place all of their names in the parentheses, along with the page number. As with other citations, the parenthetical reference follows the quotation marks, and the period follows the parentheses.

*Example 1:*

In *Finding Your Dream School and Getting In*, Grant, Jenkins, and McCoy assert that a high percentage of parents pressure their children to go to a college of the parents' choice, without considering the long-term effects that their decision will have on their children (23–25).

*Example 2:*

One group boldly suggests that a high percentage of parents pressure their children to go to a college of the parents' choice, without considering the long-term effects that their decision will have on their children (Grant, Jenkins, and McCoy 23–25).

# Guidelines for Creating a “Works Cited” Page

When writing research essays, you will need to include a list of works cited—an alphabetical list of all sources referred to in the text of your paper. The guidelines below should help you to successfully accomplish this task.

## Steps for Creating a “Works Cited” Page:

1. Begin a new page for your “Works Cited” list. It will be the last page of your manuscript.
2. Set one-inch margins and double space the entire document.
3. Place your name and the page number in the upper-right corner.
4. Center the heading at the top one-inch margin.
5. Take out your Cornell notes, note cards, or commentary notes.
  - Separate all of the references that you used in your paper from those that you did not use.
  - Double check to see that you have a source listing for every reference in the actual text of your paper.
  - Alphabetize the pages or cards according to author’s last names. If a source does not have an author, then alphabetize by title.
6. Type the “Works Cited” page.
  - Beginning at the left margin, type in the first source. If the reference is longer than one line, indent additional lines.
  - Double space the entire document.
  - Take special care to use correct format and punctuation.
  - For specific information about how to cite a particular source, refer to the list below; for more detailed information, use the MLA style guide available in your classroom.
  - Check to see that every citation in your paper has a corresponding reference on the “Works Cited” page.
7. Save your work for future revision.

## How to Cite Basic Sources:

There are many different types of works to be cited, and there are many little elements to each citation. The list below covers some of the basic sources. For information about other sources, refer to the MLA style guide in your classroom. (The sample sources below are fictional, used only to model the format.)

### ***Book or Text—Single Author***

- Type the author’s last name, followed by a comma. Then type the author’s first name, followed by a period.
- Add the title; underline or italicize it, and place a period after it.
- Type the city of publication, followed by a colon.
- Add the name of the publisher, followed by a comma.

- Add the year, followed by a period.

Hailey, Nan. Choosing the Right College. New York: Phantom Rider Press, 2003.

***Book or Text—Multiple Authors***

- Using the first author listed, type his/her last name, followed by a comma. Add his/her first name, followed by a comma. List the other authors, first name followed by last name. Separate the names with commas; use “and” before the last name. Place a period after the last name.
- Add the title; underline or italicize it, and place a period after it.
- Type the city of publication, followed by a colon.
- Add the name of the publisher, followed by a comma.
- Add the year, followed by a period.

Grant, Marisol, Denise Jenkins, and Edward McCoy. Finding Your Dream School and Getting In. San Francisco: Merchant, 2002.

***Interview***

- Type the last name of person being interviewed, followed by a comma, followed by first name, followed by a period.
- Type the title of the interview or type of interview, followed by a period. Place titles in quotations.
- Add the primary source, followed by a period. Underline or italicize it.
- Add the secondary source, followed by a period.
- Add the day, month (abbreviated) followed by a period.
- Add the year, followed by a period.

Moorhaven, Cecily. “Talking with College Admissions Officers.” On Air Digest. NBC Studios. NBC, New York. 9 Sept. 2004.

***Weekly Periodical***

- Type the author’s last name, followed by a comma, followed by author’s first name, followed by a period.
- Type the title of article, placed in quotations, followed by a period.
- Add the title of the publication, underlined or italicized.
- Add the day, month, year, followed by a colon.
- Add the page numbers of article, followed by period.

Pullman, Sarah. “Top Colleges Toot Their Horns: Get the Inside Story.” Weekly News Magazine 17 Nov. 2004: 57–64.

***Unknown Author***

- Type the title; underline or italicize it, and place a period after it.
- Type the city of publication, followed by a colon.
- Add the name of the publisher, followed by a comma.

- Add the year, followed by a period.

Scholarship Scandals: Unraveling the Inequity of Distribution. Los Angeles: Brighton Beach Publishers, 2003.

***Internet***

- Type author's last name, comma, author's first name, period.
- Type the title, followed by a period. Place it in quotations.
- Add the name of the periodical, underlined or italicized, followed by a period.
- Add the day, month, year—do not use punctuation.
- Include the full Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or Internet address. Place it in angle brackets, followed by a period.

Nevill, Roger. "Developing Scholarship Lists and Getting the Money You Need." Options for Students. 14 Sept. 2004 <<http://www.ineedascholarship.org/sch/30/univmon.html>>.

e The guidelines for correctly citing online sources are frequently updated. Check your most current MLA style manual for recent guidelines.



## Student Challenge: Converting Passive to Active Voice

### Directions:

- Select a passive sentence.
- Highlight all forms of the verb “to be.”
- Underline the subject of the passive sentence.
- Determine the *performer of the action*. (The performer of the action may not always be stated.)
- Reword the sentence using the *performer of the action* as the subject; remove all forms of the verb “to be.”

**Passive Example:** It **was** discovered by *scientists* that the deadly tsunami **was** caused by a major earthquake.

*Why change it?* This wordy, cumbersome sentence places the cause of the disaster, the point of the sentence, as the last item.

**Active Revision:** *Scientists* discovered that a major earthquake caused the deadly tsunami.

*Is it better?* Yes! The active voice makes the sentence easier to read and clarifies the main point of the sentence.



# Active/Passive Voice Game

## How to Play

1. The game may be played with 2, 3, or 4 players.
2. The players sit in a row, facing the same direction.
3. Each player takes a piece of paper and a pencil.
4. One player shuffles the game cards and places them, face down, in a stack.
5. The oldest player is elected SCOREKEEPER.
6. The youngest player draws the top card and moves to the front of the group. (No other player should see the card.) She/he is now the PERFORMER.
7. The PERFORMER follows the directions on the card.
8. Play continues until all cards have been drawn or until time runs out.

## Directions for PERFORMERS

1. Announce the subject to the rest of the group.
2. Perform the action written on the card.
3. Tell the other players to write a sentence using the announced subject as the subject of the sentence. (*Give them 30 seconds.*)
4. Ask the other players to write down on their paper if the sentence is active or passive. (*Give them 5 seconds.*)
5. Listen to each player read his/her sentence aloud.
6. Read the model sentence from the card.
7. Have scorekeeper record one point for each accurate sentence and one point for correctly choosing ACTIVE or PASSIVE. (Sentences may vary from the model and still be correct. Performers should use their best judgment and/or ask a teacher for help when needed.)
8. Ask the other players to convert the sentence into the opposite voice by changing the subject of the sentence. (*Give them 30 seconds.*)
9. Listen to each player read his/her sentence aloud.
10. Read the model sentence.
11. Have scorekeeper record one point for each player whose converted sentence is close to the model.
12. Pass play to the person on your right.

### Student Challenge: Make Cards for Future Games

*Here's how:*

- Keep the 12-step format.
- Come up with a new subject and act (steps 1 and 2).
- Write a model sentence (step 6).
- Decide if the sentence is ACTIVE or PASSIVE (step 7).
- Write a converted sentence (step 10).

**Score Card Sample**

Round #	Name	Name	Name	Name
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

# Active and Passive Voice— Guidelines and Activities

## Active Voice

The subject of the sentence—*what* or *who* it is about—does the action.

SUBJECT → PERFORMS → ACTION

When the subject performs the action, then the verb is in the active voice. Active voice keeps writing more lively and interesting.

**Example:** Scientists discovered that a major earthquake caused the deadly tsunami.

## Passive Voice

The subject of the sentence—*who* or *what* it is about—receives the action or is acted upon.

SUBJECT ← RECEIVES ← ACTION

When the subject receives the action, then the verb is in the passive voice. This makes writing more wordy and less interesting.

**Example:** It was discovered by scientists that the deadly tsunami was caused by a major earthquake.

## Activity 1: Limiting “To be” Verbs

- Edit a paper for a peer.
  - Read the paper and identify all passive sentences.
  - Highlight all forms of the verbs “to be” and “to have.”
  - Working with the writer of the paper, identify a new subject for each passive sentence.
  - Help your peer to revise the sentences into active voice.
- Find and copy a prose passage that uses forms of “to be” and “to have.”
  - Highlight all forms of “to be” and “to have.”
  - Reword the sentences, eliminating forms of “to be” and “to have.”
  - Make the subject of each sentence the doer of the action.

### Student Hint

“‘to be’ or not ‘to be’”

An easy way to limit the use of passive voice is to limit the use of forms of the verb “to be”

*Forms of “to be”*

be	am	was
being	is	were
been	are	

Also, limit the use of forms of “to have.”

*Forms of “to have”*

have	has	had
------	-----	-----

### Activity 2: Passive Voice with a Purpose

There are times when passive voice may be the writer's choice. Writers of news articles may employ passive voice to maintain objectivity and to keep their sources a secret. Writers of technical documents and scientific/psychological journals may rely upon passive voice to focus the subject of their papers. Writers of prose may choose passive voice to highlight important ideas and to manipulate their reader's focus.

**Passive:** Victims of the terrible flood were rescued by brave firefighters.

**Active:** Brave firefighters rescued flood victims.

Look at these two examples:

The first sentence places the focus on the victims, while the second places the focus on the firefighters. It is possible that a writer may choose to use passive voice to place the focus on the victims of the disaster.

#### *Try This!*

1. Find and cut out a newspaper article that uses passive voice.
  - Determine why the writer chose to use passive voice.
  - What does its use accomplish?
2. Find and copy a technical paper or an article from a scientific journal.
  - Identify five passive sentences.
  - Analyze the effects of usage of passive voice.
  - Convert two of the sentences into active voice.
  - How does this change the paper?
3. Find and copy a prose passage containing some passive sentences.
  - Study each example.
  - Why did the author choose passive voice?
  - Convert the sentences to active voice.
  - How does this affect the passage?

### Activity 3: Application to Personal Writing

1. Select a current piece of your own writing.
2. Identify all passive sentences.
3. Underline the subject of each passive sentence.
4. Determine the performer of the action. (The performer of the action may not always be stated.)
5. Highlight all forms of the verb "to be."
6. Highlight all forms of the verb "to have."
7. Determine if any of the passive sentences should remain passive to achieve a desired effect. Briefly explain your decision(s) in writing. (Revise all awkward, wordy sentences!)
8. Reword the rest of the sentences using the performer of the action as the subject; remove all forms of the verbs "to be" and "to have."

**Option:** Trade papers with a peer and do the steps above on one another's papers.

**Activity 4: Convert These Sentences!**

The following passive sentences require attention. Convert them to active voice.

1. Residents of Las Conchita were warned to leave everything behind and evacuate their homes.
2. Hundreds of boxes of cookies were sent to the soldiers serving in Iraq by the Girl Scout troops in Texas.
3. Citizens from around the world were thanked by government officials for making generous donations to the victims of the disaster.
4. It was determined by researchers a long time ago that dinosaurs were probably made extinct by natural disasters.
5. All students were told to report to the football stadium whenever a certain bell signal was given.

**Activity 5: Beware the Unnecessary Shift!**

Sometimes writers accidentally shift from active to passive voice within the same sentence. Such unnecessary shifts make writing awkward and difficult to read.

**Example:** Steve threw Bill to the ground, and then Bill was kicked and punched several times.

In this sentence, the opening phrase *Steve threw Bill to the ground* is in active voice.

Steve = Subject → Threw

The second part of the sentence *and then Bill was kicked and punched several times* is in passive voice.

Bill = Subject ← Kicked and Punched

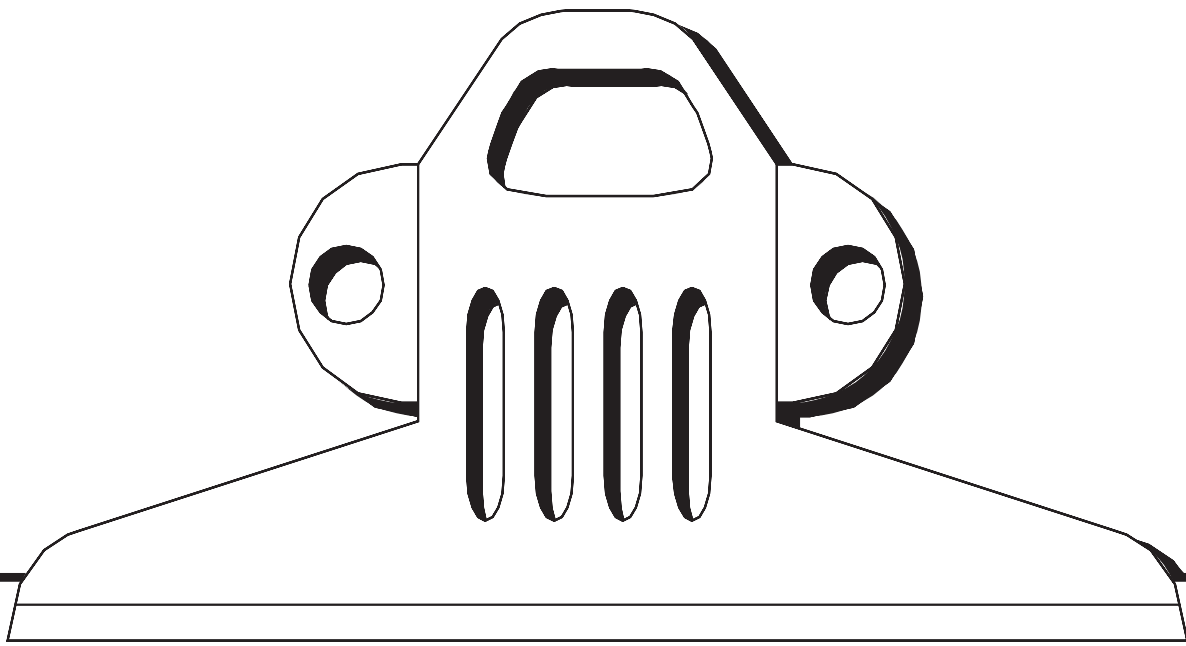
**Revision:** Steve threw Bill to the ground and then kicked and punched him several times.

Analysis: Steve is the subject of the entire sentence. The sentence is in active voice.

Steve = Subject → Threw, Kicked, Punched

**Try This!**

1. Write five sentences in which you deliberately create an unnecessary shift in voice.
2. Trade papers with a partner.
3. Identify and correct the shifts in voice. All revised sentences should be in active voice.



## Sample Passage 1: *Simple Sentences*

Javier sat beneath the old pine tree. He thought about nature. He pondered his place in the universe. He looked up at the sky. Javier looked through the branches. He forced his eyes to blur. The branches melted together. The pine cones melted together. The green needles melted together. They became one. Javier sat there for hours. He looked at the interweaving of branches. He looked at the random placement of pine cones. He looked at every needle. The pieces formed the evergreen tree.

# A Quick Guide to Sentence Structure

## SIMPLE SENTENCES

*A simple sentence expresses an idea. It contains one independent clause. An independent clause contains a subject (noun), and a predicate (verb). This type of clause can stand on its own, as a sentence—it makes complete sense all by itself. Punctuation in simple sentences follows standard usage rules.*

1. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree.

Javier is the subject (noun), and sat beneath the old pine tree is the predicate. The main verb is “sat.” This sentence is a simple sentence, because it contains just one independent clause.

2. He thought about nature.

He is the subject (noun), and thought about nature is the predicate. The main verb is “thought.” This sentence is a simple sentence, because it contains just one independent clause.

## COMPOUND SENTENCES

*A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses; the clauses express related ideas—they share common ground. The clauses are joined together by using a comma with a conjunction, or by using a semicolon.*

1. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree, and he thought about nature.

*In this example, two independent clauses are joined together with a comma and the coordinating conjunction, “and.” The two ideas are closely related.*

2. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree; he thought about nature.

*In this example, two independent clauses are joined together with a semicolon.*

3. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree; he thought about nature, and he pondered his place in the universe.

*In this example, three independent clauses are combined; the first two are joined together with a semicolon, and the last one is connected with a comma and the coordinating conjunction, “and.”*

## COMPLEX SENTENCES

*A complex sentence contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The dependent clause begins with a subordinating word and may be placed either before or after the independent clause. A comma follows the dependent clause if it comes before an independent clause; a comma precedes the dependent clause if it comes after an independent clause.*

1. As Javier sat beneath the old pine tree, he thought about nature.

*In this example, the subordinating conjunction, “as,” changes the independent clause, “Javier sat beneath the old pine tree,” into a dependent clause; therefore, it cannot stand alone. Since the clause is introductory, or before the independent clause, it is followed by a comma.*

2. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree, while he thought about nature.

*In this example, the subordinating conjunction, “while,” changes the independent clause, “he thought about nature,” into a dependent clause; therefore, it cannot stand alone. Since the clause follows the independent clause, and is tacked on to the end of the sentence, it is preceded by a comma.*

## COMPOUND/COMPLEX SENTENCES

*A compound/complex sentence contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Punctuation for compound/complex sentences follows the same guidelines stated for the other types of sentences.*

1. As Javier sat beneath the old pine tree, he thought about nature, and he pondered his place in the universe.

*In this example, the subordinating conjunction, “as,” changes the independent clause, “Javier sat beneath the old pine tree,” into a dependent clause. Since the dependent clause comes before the two independent clauses, it is followed by a comma; the two independent clauses are joined together with a comma and the coordinating conjunction “and.”*

2. Javier sat beneath the old pine tree; he thought about nature, while he pondered his place in the universe.

*In this example, the subordinating conjunction, “while” changes the independent clause, “he pondered his place in the universe,” into a dependent clause. Since the dependent clause follows an independent clause, and is tacked on to the end of the sentence, it is preceded by a comma. The two independent clauses are joined together with a semicolon.*



## Phrases

A *phrase* is a group of words that is missing a subject or predicate, or both. A phrase is not a complete sentence; instead, it adds detail to the ideas in a sentence.

## Clauses

A *clause* is a group of words that has a subject and a predicate. There are two types of clauses.

An *independent clause* has a subject and a predicate, expresses a complete idea, and can stand alone; it is a complete sentence. In many grammar books, these are also called *main clauses*.

A *dependent clause* also has a subject and a predicate, but it can't stand alone because it begins with a subordinating word; it must be linked to an independent clause to form a complete sentence. In many grammar books, these are also called *subordinate clauses*, because they are secondary to the main clause.

# A Quick Guide to Basic Parts of Speech

For more advanced elements of each of these parts of speech, please consult with your English teacher or use a grammar book/online resource as a reference.

## NOUNS

Nouns name people, places, things, and ideas—people we can meet, places we can visit, things that we can touch, or ideas we can imagine.

people	places	things	ideas
girl	garden	book	love
student	school	money	freedom
Emily	London	The Bill of Rights	Judaism

Collective nouns (*troop, committee, etc.*) refer to groups.

Proper nouns are capitalized because they refer to specific people, places, things, and ideas.

## VERBS

Verbs are action words—things that we can do.

Helping verbs do not make meaning on their own. They must work together with main verbs in order to create meaning.

be	do	have	modal
being	did	has	can
been	does	had	could
am			may
is			might
are			must
was			ought to
were			shall
			should
			will
			would

Main verbs make meaning all on their own. Examples: *run, climb, stomp, think, read, shout, swim, wait*

Verbs have three basic tenses (*past, present, and future*).

Past	Present	Future
climbed	climb	will climb
has climbed	climbing	
had climbed		

## PRONOUNS

Pronouns are replacement words—words that take the place of a noun.

There are many different forms of pronouns, but key examples include: personal, possessive, and interrogative.

Personal pronouns refer to people and things.

she	he	they	I	you	our	their	it
her	him	them	me	your	ours	theirs	its
hers	his		my	yours	we		
			mine		us		

Possessive pronouns show ownership.

my	yours	her	his	our	their
mine	its	hers		ours	theirs

Interrogative pronouns begin questions.

who	what	when	where	why	how	which
whom						
whose						

Other examples of pronouns include:

that	myself	herself	himself	yourself
itself	ourselves	themselves		
this	these	that	those	
some	most	all	nothing	none
many	few	both	one	each
one	anyone	everybody	somebody	something
many	some	any	one	anyone
someone				

## ADVERBS

Adverbs are description words—words that give information about verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

Adverbs make writing interesting and exciting to read because they add descriptive details about the words they modify.

*quickly* darted    *extremely* aggressive    *very* honestly

Some interesting facts:

- Adverbs usually end with “ly.” (*quickly*)
- There are some adverbs that do not end with “ly.” (*often, fast, very, never*)
- A very common adverb is *not*.

**ADJECTIVES**

Adjectives are description words—words that give information about nouns and pronouns.

Adjectives make writing interesting and exciting to read because they add descriptive details about the words they modify.

*delicate* flower      *fantastic* book      *egregious* crime

Some interesting facts:

- Proper nouns can be made into proper adjectives. Of course, they are capitalized!
  - We live in *America*. (noun)
  - We are all *American*. (adjective)
- Numbers act like adjectives when they tell how many of something.
  - *Twenty-four* birds sat in a row.

**PREPOSITIONS**

Prepositions are structural words—words that show relationships.

**Rule:** Prepositions come before a noun or a pronoun.

**Prepositions: A Partial List**

<i>about</i>	<i>above</i>	<i>after</i>	<i>among</i>	<i>before</i>
<i>between</i>	<i>except</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>like</i>
<i>of</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>over</i>	<i>than</i>	<i>since</i>
<i>through</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>under</i>	<i>upon</i>	<i>with</i>

There are more than one hundred prepositions in the English language. More complete lists can be found in grammar books and via the Internet.

**CONJUNCTIONS**

Conjunctions are connection words—words that join ideas together.

Coordinating conjunctions connect two like ideas (words or clauses) together.

*and*    *but*    *yet*    *so*    *or*    *for*    *nor*

Subordinating conjunctions introduce dependent clauses and create a relationship between two clauses.

*as*    *although*    *while*    *because*    *after*  
*when*    *once*    *since*    *until*    *before*

There are many different conjunctions. More complete lists can be found in grammar books and via the Internet.

**INTERJECTIONS**

Interjections are emotion words—words that show feelings and moods.

Interjections generally end with an exclamation mark and stand apart from the rest of the sentence.

We use them to show surprise, uncertainty, pain, frustration, and happiness.

- |               |                             |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| • surprise    | <i>Well! Look at that!</i>  |
| • uncertainty | <i>Hmm. I don't know...</i> |
| • pain        | <i>Ouch! Stop it!</i>       |
| • frustration | <i>Oh no! It's wrong!</i>   |
| • happiness   | <i>Wow! I made it!</i>      |

We use them to beg our parents, say “hello” to old friends, and get someone’s attention.

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| • beg           | <i>Oh! Please, Mom!</i> |
| • hello         | <i>Hi! How are you?</i> |
| • get attention | <i>Hey! Over here!</i>  |

## What Is a Mandala?

A mandala is a wondrous and meaningful design made in the form of a circle. The word *mandala* is from the classical Indian language of Sanskrit and, loosely translated, means “circle.” These special drawings were first created in Tibet over 2,000 years ago. Traditionally, they displayed highly intricate illustrations of religious significance and were used for meditation. Since then, they have been made by people from various cultures. In the Americas, Indians have created medicine wheels and sand mandalas. The circular Aztec calendar was both a timekeeping device and a religious expression of ancient Aztecs. In Asia, the Taoist “yin-yang” symbol represents opposition as well as interdependence. Over the past 2,000 years, mandalas have become a tool for displaying individual and cultural uniqueness the world over.

A simple definition of the mandala is that it is a circular drawing made to represent the harmony and wholeness of life or the wholeness of a person. Tibetans used mandalas for calming themselves and for thinking about the meaning of life. *Today, people often create mandalas to form a simple representation of who they are.* To make a mandala, a person begins by thinking of symbols that represent him or her. These symbols might include a dove to represent peace, a heart to represent love, or an open hand to represent friendship. The symbols a person chooses are then carefully drawn in the mandala.

The shape of a mandala is a circle because a circle is the most simple and universal shape found in the world. It is the form of the eye, the sun, a snowflake. Also, since there is always a center to a circle, as you look at a mandala it exercises your mind and draws you into the center of yourself or your topic.

For more information about mandalas, visit these Web sites:

Aztec Calendar: [www.crystalinks.com/aztecalendar.html](http://www.crystalinks.com/aztecalendar.html)

Mandalas in Education: [www.mandalaproject.org/What/Index.html](http://www.mandalaproject.org/What/Index.html)

Mandala Links: [www.abgoodwin.com/mandala/ccweb.shtml](http://www.abgoodwin.com/mandala/ccweb.shtml)



The Symbols of My Life		
Things Important to Me	Symbols Representing the Things Important to Me	What the Symbols Mean
<i>Examples</i> Feeling safe Family Friendship	<i>Examples</i> Dove Heart Rainbow	<i>Examples</i> Peace in the world Love/unity Hope

## Mandala Autobiography: Assignment Description

Using your mandala as the basis for your writing, create an autobiographical essay that reveals some significant aspects of your life. Your essay should describe the symbols you've chosen for your mandala, what the symbols mean, and why they are significant representations of your life. You should also help your reader to understand how all these symbols come together to demonstrate unity or wholeness, how they hold together to communicate the "essence" of who you are.

*Think about the audience to whom you'd like to write. Suggestions:*

- A. Your AVID classmates
- B. Your family
- C. Your teacher
- D. Your school (The mandala and writing might be publicly displayed.)

**Using the space below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.**

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose:** To communicate to another person or other people some areas of your life that you consider important. You want your audience to understand who you are as they read about what's important to you.

**Form:** Essay

**Essay length:** approximately 2–3 pages, double-spaced, in a legible font. (You might want to use a special font for this essay to help personalize it and connect it to your mandala.)

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Mandala Autobiography: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating mandala autobiography papers.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala includes at least five symbols that represent unique/ varied aspects of the writer and/ or his/ her life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala includes at least five symbols that represent important aspects of the writer and/ or his/ her life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala includes five symbols that represent aspects of the writer and/ or his/ her life, but some aspects seem to lack importance or appear to be redundant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala is underdeveloped and/ or incomplete</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala demonstrates symbolic purpose and is visually appealing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala is creative and visually appealing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala displays symbols, but lacks detail and/ or visual appeal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mandala displays few, if any, symbols and lacks visual appeal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mandala's connecting design is purposeful and unifies the mandala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mandala's connecting design is unique and enhances the overall mandala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mandala's connecting design is evident, but does not enhance the overall mandala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mandala has no connecting design</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay thoroughly describes and explains the symbols contained in the mandala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay describes and explains the symbols contained in the mandala</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay attempts to describe and explain the symbols contained in the mandala; some symbols may be more developed than others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay describes and/ or explains some aspects of the writer but the description/ explanation is not connected with specific symbols or the description and explanation are underdeveloped</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay uses strong sensory details to bring each symbol to life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay includes details associated with the symbols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay includes some details, but more are needed to truly understand the significance of each symbol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay does not include enough detail to clarify each symbol or clearly convey what is significant to the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay organization creates a wholeness for the essay; well-crafted transitions unify ideas and propel the reader forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay organization is logical; transitions unify ideas and help the essay to flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay organization lacks logic and creates some confusion; transitions do not always link ideas; paper may seem choppy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>essay organization is confusing; transitions are inappropriate or are missing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains richly detailed sensory images and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sensory images and appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable but not fully effective vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simple and/ or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure demonstrates problems and/ or lacks variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may have some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Autobiographical Incident: Assignment Description

**A**n autobiographical incident describes an event from a writer's past that provides insight into her/his character or personality. The event is often brief but significant. The purpose of an autobiographical incident is to reveal to readers something important about yourself: how you feel about certain things, what you believe to be important, how you see life. The incident you write about should demonstrate, in a small but intense way, how the experience has contributed to who you are and perhaps what you stand for. In AVID, the autobiographical incident is the first formal step toward the senior college admission essay.

### Assignment

Describe an event that has shaped you in some way and explain its effect on you. Include sensory details and consider incorporating dialogue, if appropriate, to bring the incident to life.

Think about the audience to whom you'd like to write. Suggestions:

- A. a narrative essay for the school literary magazine or another student publication, such as *Merlyn's Pen*
- B. a children's book or story for a younger audience to illustrate an experience many kids may face
- C. a letter to a parent
- D. a letter to a descendant
- E. a letter to a friend
- F. an essay for the class

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 2–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Autobiographical Incident: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating autobiographical incident papers.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something essential about the writer's character or personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something important about the writer's character or personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something that happened to the writer, but does not adequately convey its importance or show how the event shaped the writer's character or personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tells about something that happened to the writer, but does not show its importance or significance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shares a complete, focused story; a series of events is tightly linked to a specific incident, at a particular time, and in a specific place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shares a well developed story; a series of events is linked to a specific incident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shares a story, but lacks development and/or includes irrelevant details; events are loosely connected and/or span too much time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not share a story; events are disjointed, unrelated, or sketchy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story is rich in sensory details; "showing" writing allows the reader to share the experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story includes a fair amount of details; some "showing" writing invites the reader to share the experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story includes some details, but not enough to bring the incident to life; the writing tends to tell more than show, thus not fully allowing the reader to share the experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>little if any detail; writing tells or summarizes; reader does not feel a part of the experience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story presents a clear and logical sequence of events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story presents an appropriate sequence of events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story sequence is apparent, but creates some confusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>story sequence lacks detail and creates confusion as to what happened or when events occurred</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the people involved are richly detailed, and their role in the incident is clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the people involved are described, and their role in the incident is suggested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the people involved are introduced, but their role in the incident is not fully revealed/detailed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the people involved are not mentioned; their role in the incident is not explained</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dialogue is mixed skillfully with the description/narration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is strong in description/narration; if dialogue is used, it adds to the story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is limited in description; could be strengthened by the inclusion of dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>little, if any, description or dialogue</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains richly detailed sensory images and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sensory images and appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure may demonstrate problems and/or lack variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Biography: Assignment Description

**T**he biography should depict a person who is influential in your life, usually a person you know well, but not so intensely that you are unable to evaluate the person with some objectivity. The sketch should include the habits, attitudes, and personal qualities that make the individual significant to you. It should combine descriptive, narrative, and interpretive writing into one powerful form. Because you cannot tell everything you know about a person in a few pages, you will need to identify what is special or unique about the person. When you characterize someone, you describe specific qualities—or characteristics—that help the reader to see and understand the person as you do. Anecdotes—stories about the person—that illustrate those qualities add to the characterization and bring him or her to life.

### Assignment

Select a person who has been influential in your life in some way. In writing, describe and characterize the person, and explain her/his importance to you. Incorporate anecdotes to bring the person to life.

Think about the form of your writing and the audience you'd like to address.

### Examples

- A. an article for the school newspaper
- B. an essay for a family history
- C. a letter to the person about whom you're writing
- D. a story for other students
- E. a biographical sketch of an adult volunteer at your school (mentor, etc.)

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 2–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Biography: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating biography papers.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>brings the subject to life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the subject clearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develops some aspects of the subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>talks about but does not adequately describe the subject</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes the subject in vivid detail, including physical attributes, personality, and behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes the subject in enough detail to capture the subject's physical attributes, personality, and behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offers minimal description of the subject's physical attributes, personality, and behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not develop the subject's physical description, personality, and/or behavior</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is rich in anecdotes that reveal the subject's character and personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes well-chosen anecdotes that reveal the subject's character and personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes some anecdotes, but they do not reveal insight as to the subject's character and personality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not include anecdotes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's thoughtful and logical conclusions about the subject and the importance of the subject to the writer; uses precise language to communicate strong feelings about the subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's logical conclusions about the subject and why the writer chose the subject; uses appropriate language to communicate feelings about the subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hints at the writer's conclusions about the subject and offers some idea as to why the subject was chosen; language may fail to communicate feelings about the subject</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents few, if any, conclusions about the subject and offers little to no reasoning as to why the subject was chosen; language used does not communicate feelings about the subject</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in a logical, interesting manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent manner or is somewhat illogical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively for the selected topic or audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains richly detailed sensory images and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sensory images and appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable but not fully effective vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary which sometimes interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure demonstrates problems and/or lacks variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## College Admission Essay: Assignment Description

**T**he college admission essay is, in most cases, the single chance you will have to inject your voice into the application process. The essay gives you the opportunity to enthrall, compel, entertain and—at the very least—inform your audience about aspects of your personality, your experiences, and your aspirations that will not emerge from other portions of the application. This essay will either be the most difficult assignment of your senior year or the easiest; it is doubtful that anyone will feel ambivalent about crafting it. The essay may also be the most thought-provoking, significant writing you do this year. The brevity requested by most colleges requires that every word be essential; the stakes, by necessity, require that every sentence conveys the essence of who you are—truly. Capturing your essence and your opinions on paper is a challenge that is often overshadowed in academia by the carefully constructed curtain of analysis. In your college essay, the curtain must be pulled back; you, yourself, must appear in the window of the page.

It is likely that you will be completing several essays to accompany your college applications; investing time in every step of the writing process will be immensely beneficial to you while working on these projects. Models, prewriting, writing, reading, thinking, and discussion will provide you with a rich—if potentially overwhelming—source of material from which to draw, and response group critique will expose you to the range of reactions admissions committees may have to your writing. You may find that revision is ongoing until the day you mail your applications, and that you will make use of several editors to ensure that the essays you send to colleges are free of any trouble spots that might distract readers. The activities in this unit will provide you with resources and suggestions that can enhance your essays and enrich the experience in which you find yourself immersed during the first month or more of your senior year.

### Assignment

Select an essay topic provided by a college to which you are applying, or select a topic from those listed below. Included are some *generic* prompts that might be used by scholarship organizations or colleges requesting a general personal statement.

Paying close attention to the opening of your essay—you want it to be compelling—complete an essay that clearly addresses the topic you’ve selected. Unless an essay topic you provide specifies otherwise, limit your final draft to no more than two double-spaced, typed/word-processed pages. Include a heading and title on the first page, and your name, in the upper right, on the second page.

### Topics

- The biologist Stephen Jay Gould dedicated one of his books to his father “who took me to see the Tyrannosaurus when I was five.” Zora Neale Hurston describes in her autobiography a volume of Greek myths she received as a girl and quickly committed to memory. Writers, scientists, artists, athletes—almost anyone, it seems, who has achieved success in his or her career—can point to an experience that seemed to mark the beginning of his/her life’s course or the tilt of his/her personality. Tell us about a formative encounter in your own life with a book, a teacher, an idea or theory, a work of art, stories heard at a

grandmother's knee (or the grandmother herself), a film, a painting, or even a hospital stay. (University of Chicago)

- Given the scope of the world's problems—from political conflict and environmental decay to drug use, disease, and poverty—it may seem that we cannot reasonably expect solutions. Choose an instance which proves to you that change in the status quo is possible. (Amherst)
- Tell us about an opinion that you have had to defend or an incident in your life which placed you in conflict with the beliefs of a majority of people, and explain how this affected your value system. (MIT)
- Read Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*. Choose one of her observations and write a creative, reflective, or provocative essay. Or read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Drawing upon personal experience, write a creative, reflective, or provocative essay. (Notre Dame)
- Is there anything you would like us to know about you or your academic record that you have not had the opportunity to describe elsewhere in this application? (University of California)
- How have you taken advantage of the educational opportunities you have had to prepare for college? (University of California)
- Tell us about a talent, experience, contribution, or personal quality you will bring to the University of California.
- Generic prompt: Tell us about yourself in such a way as to help us understand who you are and why we should consider you for... (this scholarship, admission to this college, etc.).
- Generic prompt: If accepted to this school (or for this scholarship), what will you do to contribute positively to the institution or community? What will you bring to the school or community that is valuable?

*Indicate your essay focus below. Be as specific as possible.*

**Topic** upon which you are writing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Audience** to whom you are writing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 2 pages (unless a different length is specified with your particular prompt); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Some Advice About Style and Approach

**T**he college essay bears a burden weightier than that of other high school writing. It must bring you to life from the start, draw readers into the essay, and do so in a way that is uniquely your own. Ideally, it should be an essay that you, yourself, might want to read, that you would look through many years from now as you might an old photograph album for clues as to who you were, what you did, and what created the you that was captured at a particular moment in a snapshot. Fred Hargadon, who has served as Dean of Admissions at Swarthmore, Stanford, and Princeton, articulates nicely the audience you will want to consider while composing your draft. He writes, “...my first piece of advice is to write your essays, not for some imaginary admissions officer or faculty member at the other end, but for yourselves...”

What Hargadon goes on to say is equally important to you as you begin your draft. Hargadon’s “second piece of advice” is to “consider simply telling a story.” Even some of the most analytical essay topics can be approached with depth in the storytelling mode, drawing readers smoothly in and providing writers with a comfortable form of discourse. As Hargadon says, “...storytelling comes more naturally to most of us, and also more accurately expresses our nature, than does essay writing.”

Whatever the choices you make about style, work toward *showing*, rather than simply *telling*, about yourself. Describe incidents when you contended with financial hardship, conflicting school and work schedules, or balancing academics and extracurricular activities, rather than telling your readers that you are resourceful. Describe encounters with language barriers, school placements, or family mobility to show your tenacity, rather than telling readers that it is one of your significant characteristics. Describe your participation in student government, volunteer work, or role on an athletic team, rather than telling readers that you have leadership ability. Describe hours in the library, the experiments you conduct in your kitchen, or the computer programs you’ve designed, rather than simply telling your readers that you love to learn. Use details and images to develop the photograph.

The opening paragraph of your essay should capture something definitive about you as a person—a quality or experience or insight that reflects all else that you will write about in the essay. Ideally, the essence of your first paragraph will also provide you with something to return to at the end of the essay, something that you can bring full circle and amplify in the conclusion of your essay. In addition to thinking hard about the content of the opening paragraph, you’ll want to think hard about style. Effective essays find a technique and a voice for conveying the essence of the writer from the very start. By doing that, they intrigue readers,

give them a reason—and a desire—to keep reading with interest. You may find that you spend as much time writing and revising the opening paragraph as you do writing and revising all of the other paragraphs put together! It is time well spent. Developing a refreshing way to connect what you want to say about yourself with how you say it can greatly enhance the flow and impact of the rest of the essay.

Some possibilities for the style of your opening paragraph include, but are not limited to:

- presentation of an image (description that uses sensory details to create a mental picture of a person, place, thing, situation) that includes you or becomes a point of reference for your thoughts.
- one or more lines of dialogue with clear reference to who is speaking and the significance of the dialogue.
- reference to a person who has had some kind of impact on your attitudes, development, and/or aspirations.
- reference to a work of art (literature/fine art/performance art/music/film), including its significance to you.
- reference to a world/national/local event that has had an impact on you and/or establishes your ability to think deeply about the world around you.
- reference to an historical event, period, or figure that is significant to you (e.g., emblematic of courage or cowardice, the embodiment of an ideal or an aberration).
- quotation from or reference to a person who has contributed to a field that interests you (e.g., Escalante on education, Ailey on dance, McCall on journalism).
- statement of social/political/environmental/religious concern.
- recollection of a memory that establishes your cultural/political/ethical identity and/or the foundation of a goal.
- humor, in the form of an anecdote, observation, and/or dialogue that is related to aspects of your personality and/or experiences that emerge in the essay.

As you experiment with different versions of your opening paragraph, get as much feedback as you can from other students, tutors, and your teacher. Ask them whether the openings are interesting, seem meaningful in subject matter and tone, and most of all, whether they truly capture “the you” of you. The last question is the one you’ll want to ask yourself again and again as you fashion your essay.

## Ideas for Creating a Title

A strong title draws the reader into a piece of writing. It is the “hook” that generates initial interest and enthusiasm in the reader.

*For an effective title, try using:*

<b>alliteration</b>	e.g., “Dialogue at Dinner,” “Picking and Planting Roots”
<b>paradox</b>	e.g., “When Questioning is the Answer,” “A Heaven for the Atheist”
<b>allusion</b>	e.g., “My Side of Paradise” (reference to Fitzgerald); “Profile in Conviction” (allusion to Kennedy)
<b>rhyme</b>	e.g., “The Motion and Devotion of My Life”
<b>subtitle</b>	e.g., “From the Gridiron to the Classroom: Hard Work is the Key”
<b>parallel structure</b>	e.g., “Always Learning, Always Growing,” “To Think, To Know, To Act”

## College Admission Essay: Rubric

When you receive letters of acceptance from the colleges to which you have applied, you will know you have earned a “very effective” evaluation. In the meantime, the following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating college admission essays.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responds to the prompt creatively and provocatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responds to the prompt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to respond to the prompt, but may not do so entirely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not fully address the prompt or is off topic/misses the point of the prompt</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something important about the writer of significance to the target audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something interesting about the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reveals something about the writer, but its significance may be unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tells little of significance about the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a strong, novel introduction that compels the reader to continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an interesting introduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a somewhat engaging introduction, but gaps are apparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a bland introduction that is unlikely to capture the reader’s interest</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is rich in sensory details, <i>showing</i> attributes of the writer rather than <i>telling</i> about them; images bring the writer to life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes enough detail to engage the reader and reveal attributes of the writer; mostly <i>shows</i>, but may occasionally <i>tell</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes some details, but not enough to bring the writer’s attributes into focus; tends to <i>tell</i> more than <i>show</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not include enough details to convey attributes of the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dialogue is mixed skillfully with description/narration; there are no places where dialogue seems to be missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dialogue is engaging, not distracting; there may be a place or two where additional dialogue would enhance the essay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dialogue is distracting rather than engaging; places exist where dialogue would enhance overall appeal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dialogue is mundane or poorly phrased; places exist where dialogue would enhance overall appeal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>organization is logical and interesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent manner or is somewhat illogical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains richly detailed sensory images and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sensory images and appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains some simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure may demonstrate problems/lack variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may have some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Explanation of Life Goals: Assignment Description

**I**n this paper, you will tell your readers about some of the goals you have set for your life. You will talk about who you would like to become, what you would like to achieve in school and beyond, what career you are guiding yourself toward, and what you would like to be known for. In addition, you will write about what you have already achieved or what you are engaged in, as well as what you plan to do that will help turn your goals into realities. While at least some of your goals may be shared by others, the way in which you present them in this paper will be unique to you.

### Assignment

Choose the audience, purpose, and form for your paper. In your writing, discuss and explain your academic, professional, and/or personal goals. Include an explanation of past and present endeavors that have already had an impact on your attainment of these goals, and identify your plan for continuing to work toward your goals this school year. Based on your teacher's direction, you might also emphasize the area listed below for your grade level:

- 9th grade: Discuss your specific goals for success in high school.
- 10th grade: Discuss your specific goals for high school as preparation for college.
- 11th grade: Discuss your specific goals related to planning for college and a career.
- 12th grade: Discuss your specific approach to the college admission and school selection process AND/OR switch to writing your college admission essay.

### *Suggested Audience, Purpose, Form (Select from those below or determine your own.)*

- A. Letter to an organization that supports students from the community with financial aid, summer work opportunities, and mentors (for example, a scholarship organization).
  - *audience:* members of the organization
  - *purpose:* to receive financial aid or work
  - *form:* letter
- B. Personal statement for a college admissions committee.
  - *audience:* admissions committee
  - *purpose:* to be admitted to the college
  - *form:* statement/essay
- C. Statement for an article, featuring you as student of the month, to be published in the school/local newspaper.
  - *audience:* school or community
  - *purpose:* to inform others
  - *form:* statement/essay

D. Essay to introduce yourself to your AVID teacher, tutors, and classmates.

- *audience:* AVID teacher, tutors, class
- *purpose:* to inform
- *form:* essay

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paper length:** approximately 1–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Explanation of Life Goals: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating explanation of life goals papers.

<i><b>Very Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Somewhat Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Ineffective</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides a clear and thorough explanation of the writer's academic, professional, and/or personal goals (areas of emphasis will differ; based on students' chosen focus and/or grade level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides a clear explanation of the writer's academic, professional, and/or personal goals (areas of emphasis will differ based on students' chosen focus and/or grade level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides some explanation of the writer's academic, professional, and/or personal goals (areas of emphasis will differ; based on students' chosen focus and/or grade level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to provide an explanation of the writer's academic, professional, and/or personal goals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates detailed information about what the writer has already done and is doing to attain goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates information about what the writer has already done and is doing to attain goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides some information about what the writer has already done and is doing to attain goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides little or no information about what the writer has already done and is doing to attain goals</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies a specific, viable plan to work toward goals this school year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies a plan to work toward goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a plan to work toward goals, but the plan may not be fully developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not present a plan for working toward goals this year</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates depth of thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates some depth of thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates inadequate depth of thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not demonstrate depth of thought</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in a logical, interesting manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent, somewhat illogical manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an illogical manner or in a manner that does not suit the topic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a strong, consistent voice and tone appropriate for the stated audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an appropriate voice and tone for the stated audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a fairly inconsistent voice and/or tone for the stated audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an inappropriate or ineffective voice and/or tone for the stated audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains interesting and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure may demonstrate problems and/or lack variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has numerous mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Career Research: Assignment Description

The career research paper provides an opportunity to explore a career that is interesting to you. This writing assignment will give you a chance to practice your research skills, using interviews, observations, current publications, and reference material. The paper should reveal information about the life of a person working in this career and should report detailed information about the profession, including the number of years of university training, job benefits and drawbacks, salary, hours, and work calendar. In addition, the paper should reveal the reasons for your personal interest in this profession.

### Assignment

Select a career that interests you. In your report, present specifics about the profession as noted above, as well as details about the life of a person working within the field. In addition, discuss the reasons for your interest in this career.

Use parenthetical references to cite all sources used in your paper, and include a “Works Cited” page.

Think about the audience to whom you’d like to write.

Suggestions:

- A. a paper (essay or letter) providing career information for a 9th-grade AVID student
- B. a children’s book for a younger audience describing this career
- C. a paper convincing your parents of the importance of college to pursue your career goals
- D. a paper providing career information for your peers

Whatever your choice of audience, your purpose is to conduct research and to inform that audience and yourself about a specific career. Since this is a formal research paper, facts and other data must have proper references. For example, if you quote a business executive about successful marketing techniques, you must cite the executive’s name and title in the paper.

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you’re writing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 3–5 pages (depending on the form you’ve chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Career Research: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating career research papers.

<i><b>Very Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Somewhat Effective</b></i>	<i><b>Ineffective</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates in-depth understanding of a specific career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates clear understanding of a specific career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates some understanding of a specific career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates little, if any, understanding of a specific career</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides richly detailed information about the career and about the life of a person working within the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides complete information about the career and about the life of a person working within the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides vague or incomplete information about the career and about the life of a person working within the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides insufficient information about the career and about the life of a person working within the field</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides detailed information about the qualifications necessary to enter the profession, as well as the demands and rewards of the career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides complete information about the qualifications necessary to enter the profession, as well as the demands and rewards of the career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides general or incomplete information about the qualifications necessary to enter the profession, as well as the demands and rewards of the career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides little, if any, information about the qualifications necessary to enter the profession, as well as the demands and rewards of the career</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conveys strong insight into the writer's interest in the profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conveys clear reasons for the writer's interest in the profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conveys some reasons for the writer's interest in the profession, but more development is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conveys few, if any, reasons for the writer's interest in the profession</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes references to thorough and varied research; uses proper format to cite references</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes references to completed research; uses proper format to cite references</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes references to some research, but research is incomplete and/or references are not cited properly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes few, if any, references to research and/or references are not cited properly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in a logical, interesting manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent manner or is somewhat illogical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively for the selected topic or audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains interesting and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure may demonstrate problems and/or lack variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has numerous mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Description of a Place: Assignment Description

**J**oseph Conrad, one of the great authors of the twentieth century, said that the main job of a writer is to make the reader see. This writing assignment, the description of a place, will give you a chance to practice and develop that skill. A well-written description of a place “shows” the reader the place instead of merely “telling” what the place is like. A good description is rich in detail. It is very specific about such things as location, size, shape, color, and texture. It includes sensory details that reveal what the place smells, sounds, looks, tastes, and feels like. As a result, the reader really does *see* the place, as though the words of the description were a kind of amazing camera.

### Assignment

Pick a place that is memorable to you and describe it, use a consistent point of view and vivid details to allow your reader to really “see” and experience this place. Use descriptive details to communicate a particular mood about your place that will leave an impression on the reader.

Descriptions of place are appreciated by many different audiences. Rather than simply viewing this assignment as a piece to be read only by the teacher, tutors, and classmates, consider one of the following writing forms (or some other option that seems relevant to you):

- A. a letter to a friend describing the place
- B. a speech to the City Council about a building in your neighborhood that you want to save, but which the council has plans to tear down
- C. a letter to a local planning commission about an open space area that you feel should be preserved
- D. an article for a travel magazine or travel agency about a place others might want to visit
- E. a children’s book that brings your place to life (you might also include illustrations)

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you’re writing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 1–3 pages (depending on the form you’ve chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Description of a Place: Rubric			
The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating description of a place papers.			
<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes a specific place in careful detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes a specific place in detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partially describes a specific place or describes a place in general terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conveys some information about a place but does not describe—or “show”—the place</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates vivid sensory details so that significant aspects of the place are easily imaginable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates sensory details so that significant aspects of the place are easily imaginable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporates some details that are significant to the place, but description is incomplete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to incorporate enough details about the place to allow the reader to imagine it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses precise, carefully chosen words to communicate a strong mood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses words effectively to communicate a general mood of the place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tends to use general rather than precise words to describe the place; a mood is hinted at, but not firmly established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses vague words to describe the place; a particular mood is difficult to discern</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is well-organized and shows artful mastery of point of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is well-organized, and demonstrates a strong understanding of point of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is somewhat ineffective in point of view and/or organization, causing the reader to be unsure about where things are in relation to each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively for the selected topic or audience; uses an inappropriate or ineffective point of view</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>voice and tone are appropriate and remain consistent throughout the entire piece</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an appropriate voice and tone for the chosen audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is somewhat consistent in voice and/or tone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>voice and/or tone are inappropriate and detract from the overall impression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains richly detailed sensory images and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sensory images and appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that may interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure may demonstrate problems and/or lack variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that occasionally interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Explanation of a Process: Assignment Description

**A**n explanation of a process is a report detailing a logically ordered series of steps which lead to an identifiable result. The writer becomes an expert in a process by thoroughly researching the topic and clearly explaining each step to a selected audience. All explanations should be factual, complete, and interesting enough to encourage readers to follow and remember the information the writer is presenting.

### Assignment

Select a process that interests you. Develop a paper that logically explains the steps and order of the process, including the result. Your writing should be so clear that your readers can successfully follow the steps to a satisfactory outcome simply by reading your explanation. You should also establish your authority to talk about this process and offer enough background information to convey its importance.

Think about the *audience* to whom you'd like to write. Some suggestions include:

- A. a paper or extra credit report for an academic class
- B. an informative essay for younger students
- C. a resource document for others interested in the topic
- D. a three-part essay for AVID
- E. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

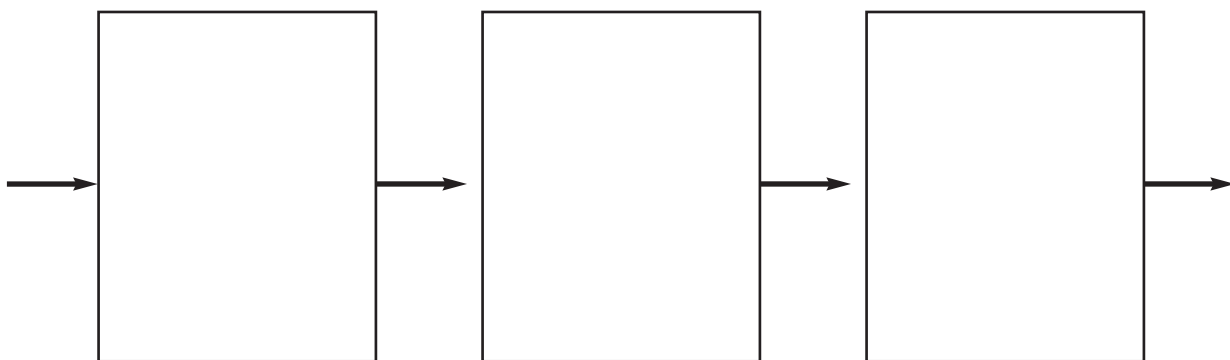
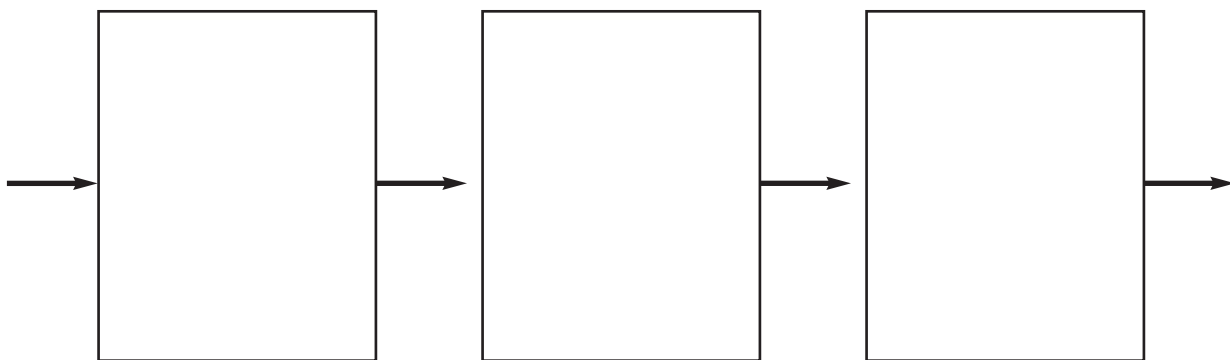
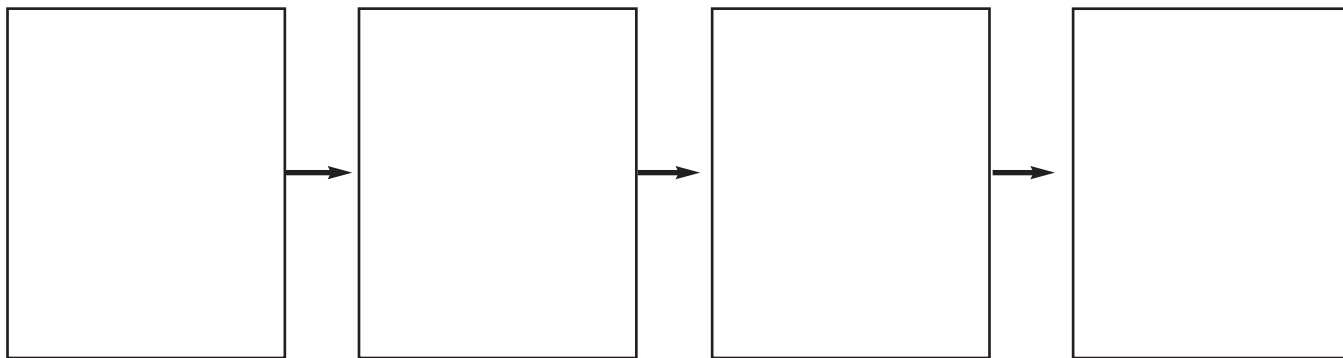
\_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 1–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Sequential Graphic Organizer

Write the individual steps of your process in each box. On the arrows, write the transition words that you will use to introduce each step.



## Explanation of a Process: Rubric

The following rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating an explanation of a process paper.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies all of the essential steps in a process and presents them in a logical order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies the major steps in a process and presents them in a logical order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies most of the major steps in a process; may present a few of them out of order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>omits important steps in a process and/or presents steps in a way that creates confusion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes all major steps in detail, pointing out significant and/or unique features to provide readers with a clear understanding of the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describes each step, including information necessary to provide readers with a clear understanding of the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides some information about each step, giving readers only a general sense of the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides little, if any, explanation of each step, conveying no clear sense of the overall process</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>artfully establishes the authority of the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes the authority of the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to establish the authority of the writer, but does not fully accomplish the goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to establish the authority of the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creates interest and conveys the importance of the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creates interest and/or conveys a sense of the importance of the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to create some interest and to convey some importance of the process, but neither is firmly established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to create interest or to convey the importance of the process</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a highly developed and logical organizational scheme that fits the process and the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately for the given process and audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent manner or is somewhat inappropriate for the process or audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively for the given process and audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains interesting and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary which may interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure demonstrates problems and/or lacks variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Character Analysis: Assignment Description

**A** character analysis focusing on character traits examines the behavior of a character in a novel, play, short story, or other literary work. It identifies the essential traits of the person and looks for meaning in her/his portrayal. A convincing analysis supports those conclusions with detailed evidence of the character's actions, words, or thoughts, and/or evidence of what other characters say or think about him/her.

### Assignment

Select a character from a literary work. In a paper, discuss the essential traits of the character in terms of personality, beliefs, actions, or appearance. Use those essential traits to draw some conclusions about the motives, values, and/or significance of the character. Support your analysis with evidence from the literary work.

Identify the audience to whom you will be writing. Use one of the suggestions below (or choose another option that is relevant for this assignment):

- A. a review for a student literary journal
- B. a recommendation to other AVID students of an interesting work they might like to read
- C. a fictional journal entry in which another character in the work comments on the character you've decided to analyze
- D. a three-part essay for AVID or an academic class

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 2–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Identifying Character Traits and Textual Evidence

- Using the list of character traits brainstormed in class, identify three specific traits that seem especially important about your character and that will help your reader understand him/her. Look for traits that are related to one another in some way. Write your traits in the boxes in the top row.
- Return to your story to find evidence in support of each trait. Quote, paraphrase, or summarize your evidence from the text and list the corresponding page numbers in the boxes below your traits.
- Looking at your traits and evidence, make some conclusions about why the traits are important. Consider what the traits say about your character's motives, values, and beliefs or how they are connected to the story's plot or theme.

**TRAIT**

**TRAIT**

**TRAIT**



**TEXT EVIDENCE**



**TEXT EVIDENCE**



**TEXT EVIDENCE**

**CONCLUSION(S):** Why these traits are important. Answers the “so what?” of these traits.

Character Analysis: Rubric				
This rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating character analysis papers (with a focus on character traits).				
<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>		<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a thought-provoking thesis statement that establishes a clear position and previews or anticipates the coming analysis for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a clearly defined thesis statement that establishes a position that needs to be proven</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a general thesis statement that establishes some direction, but does not offer a clear and specific position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks a valid thesis statement or advances a summary statement that is already understood and does not need to be proven</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates an insightful selection of essential character traits in terms of personality, beliefs, actions, or appearance; may use other characters from the text to help establish the essential traits of the character under analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies significant character traits in terms of personality, beliefs, actions, or appearance</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies some character traits in terms of personality, beliefs, actions, or appearance, but these may not be significant traits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offers general or brief descriptions/examples of the character in terms of personality, beliefs, actions, or appearance, but does not identify significant traits</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents thoughtful and logical conclusions about the character's motives, values, and/or significance as they are connected to the traits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents valid conclusions about the character's motives, values, and/or significance as they are connected to the traits</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents some reasonable conclusions about the character's motives, values, and/or significance as they are connected to the traits, but may also present some illogical and/or inaccurate conclusions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes inaccurate and/or contradictory conclusions as to the character's motives, values, and/or significance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>thoughtful analysis of an abundance of well-selected textual evidence provides thorough support of all main ideas and proves the thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accurate analysis of appropriate textual evidence provides adequate support for main ideas and proves the thesis</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempted analysis of a few pieces of textual evidence somewhat supports ideas, but the quality and amount are not adequate to prove the thesis; some of the evidence selected may not support the intended point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>little to no textual evidence is used to support ideas; selected evidence does not support the intended point; may provide plot summary rather than analysis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>logically organized, highly developed paragraphs skillfully blend textual evidence with analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>well organized, adequately developed paragraphs state evidence and offer analysis</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inconsistently organized paragraphs contain evidence and analysis that are disjointed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>poorly developed and inappropriately organized paragraphs lack evidence and/or analysis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mature and confident vocabulary generates reader appeal and persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>varied and interesting vocabulary creates reader appeal and establishes some sense of a persuasive voice</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary; does not maintain reader appeal and/or develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary; fails to create reader appeal and develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>varied sentence structure and skillfully crafted phrases capture reader interest and accomplish a persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sound sentence structure and consciously crafted phrases heighten reader appeal and work to accomplish persuasive voice</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problematic sentence structure and carelessly crafted phrases diminish reader appeal and detract from persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problematic sentence structure and poorly crafted phrases fail to create reader appeal and develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Problem-Solution Analysis: Assignment Description

**P**roblem-solution essays identify and analyze the causes and effects of a particular problem. They present possible solutions to the problem, briefly discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, they advocate a specific solution to the problem.

### Assignment

Identify a problem that concerns you. In a paper, discuss your problem and possible solutions, and then argue for one particular solution. In this paper you will:

- develop a thesis statement that names the problem, asserts your position, and states a solution
- establish that the problem exists and is a valid concern
- examine the details of the problem (causes, effects, predictions)
- explore possible solutions and their strengths and weaknesses
- argue for one particular solution; acknowledge its advantages and disadvantages
- identify and argue against opposing viewpoints to your solution

Because the problem you select may be of concern to others, there are many possibilities for the audience, purpose, and form of your writing. Possibilities include:

- an article or editorial for your school/local newspaper
- a letter to the owner/manager of the business for which you work
- a proposal to a local service group
- a letter to the administration of your school
- a three-part essay for other AVID students

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you're writing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 1–3 pages (depending on the form you've chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Solutions Chart		
The problem: _____		
Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages

# Sample Outline for Problem-Solution Analysis

## **I. Introduction:**

- Draw the reader in with something interesting related to the topic.
- Identify the problem and cite evidence that supports the existence of this problem.
- Define the problem—what it is and why it exists.
- Establish the thesis—name problem, assert position, state solution.
- Forecast the rest of the paper—identify what is to come.

## **II. First body paragraph (possibly more than one paragraph):**

- Further establish that the problem exists (building on introduction).
- Detail causes—who and/or what.
- Describe effects—on people and/or things, progressively developing harmful effects.
- Make predictions about the future if the problem goes unchecked.

## **III. Second and all other body paragraphs (number will depend on how many other solutions you identify and explain):**

- Name a solution (one already being used or that has been proposed).
- Identify its advantages and disadvantages.
- Cite facts (evidence) in support of its advantages/disadvantages; cite references to your research sources.
- Transition to the next paragraph.

## **IV. Final body paragraph:**

- Name the solution for which you are arguing.
- Identify its advantages and disadvantages.
- Cite facts (evidence) in support of its advantages/disadvantages; cite references to your research sources.
- Explain why you believe this to be the most appropriate solution to the problem.
- Transition to next paragraph.

## **V. Conclusion:**

- Recognize and acknowledge the variety of solutions to the stated problem and reassert your solution.
- Refer back to the introduction (if appropriate) and leave the reader with something important to think about related to your stated problem and solution.
- Make a plea for others to get involved.
- Visualize your solution working—what does it look like?

## Problem-Solution Analysis: Rubric

This rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating problem-solution analysis papers.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly states the problem and thoughtfully analyzes its significant causes and effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly states the problem and discusses its causes and effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>states the problem but only partially presents its causes and effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>states the problem but discusses few, if any, causes or effects</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes the seriousness of the problem; the outlining of harmful effects creates strong emotional and/or logical appeal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes the existence of the problem; the explanation of harmful effects adds to persuasive appeal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the problem and some of its harmful effects, but does not do so in a persuasive way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>states the problem, but the failure to explain harmful effects detracts from overall persuasive appeal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a range of solutions proposed by others; examines the strengths and weaknesses of each</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a range of solutions proposed by others; mentions the strengths and weaknesses of each, but discussion is not thoroughly developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents some solutions proposed by others, but fails to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, suggesting incomplete research and/or insufficient thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mentions that proposed solutions to the problem exist, but fails to discuss details</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's proposed solution; supports that judgment with well-argued reasons, evidence from experts, and/or the writer's expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's proposed solution; supports that judgment with some evidence from cited experts and/or the writer's expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's proposed solution, but support is lacking and/or unconvincing; may fail to cite experts and/or establish writer's expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents the writer's proposed solution, but fails to provide evidence in support of the proposal; fails to cite experts and/or establish the expertise of the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acknowledges the main objections to the proposed solution and skillfully dismisses them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>considers significant objections to the proposed solution and adequately refutes them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mentions some objections to the proposed solution, but does not refute them or does so inadequately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>alludes to an objection or two concerning the proposed solution or does not mention specific objections; fails to refute objections that are mentioned</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paragraphs are logically organized and thoroughly developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paragraphs are well-organized and adequately developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paragraphs are inconsistently developed and organized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>paragraphs are poorly developed and inappropriately organized</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mature and confident vocabulary generates reader appeal and persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>varied and interesting vocabulary creates reader appeal and establishes some sense of a persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary; does not maintain reader appeal and/or develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary; fails to create reader appeal and develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>varied sentence structure and skillfully crafted phrases capture reader interest and accomplish a persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sound sentence structure and consciously crafted phrases heighten reader appeal and work to accomplish persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problematic sentence structure and carelessly crafted phrases diminish reader appeal and detract from persuasive voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>problematic sentence structure and poorly crafted phrases fail to create reader appeal and develop persuasive voice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Argument: Assignment Description

**A**n argument establishes the writer’s position on an issue and presents a variety of evidence and different points of view in an attempt to persuade the reader of the credibility of the writer’s position. An argument is rooted in the many personal, social, and political issues about which people disagree strongly. As such, it allows the writer an opportunity to explore an issue and to formulate an articulate response to the differing points of view relative to that issue. In a democratic society, participation in the debate of issues is especially important. To enter that debate, students must be able to discern how an argument is being made, to think logically about the reasoning that is offered, and to anticipate counterarguments and rebut them. This paper is a move toward engaging in that debate.

### Assignment

Identify an issue about which you feel strongly. Advance your position (claim) about this topic and convince your audience of the credibility of your claim. You must offer support for your claim by offering evidence in the form of personal examples/anecdotes, facts/statistics, and/or expert opinions/examples. To build your credibility and enhance persuasive appeal, you should also recognize opposing arguments to your claim and counter them with clear evidence and/or explanations.

Audiences for an argument paper are many and varied. For the purposes of this paper, you might consider writing to one of these audiences (or another relevant one of your choosing):

- A. a letter to the editor of a community or city newspaper
- B. the text for a speech to be delivered in your AVID class, at school, or in the community
- C. an article for your school newspaper
- D. an essay for your AVID peers
- E. a letter to a parent

*Using the spaces below, indicate your focus. Be as specific as possible.*

**Audience** to whom you’re writing: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose** for writing to this audience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Form** this paper will take: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Paper length:** approximately 2–4 pages (depending on the form you’ve chosen); 12-point, legible font; double-spaced.

**Due date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## A Look at Logical Reasoning

**R**ead the statements below and identify the logical reasoning steps (stated or unstated). You will have to consider what is missing and any unstated assumptions. After you've identified the steps, discuss with others whether the reasoning is convincing. What details would you need to see in order to be convinced of the truth of the statement?

**EXAMPLE: Coach Anderson should be fired because a coach's job is to win football games.**

### *Reasoning*

- A. If: A coach's job is to win football games.
- B. If: Mr. Anderson was hired to be a football coach.
- C. If: The football team is losing.
- D. Then: Coach Anderson should be fired because a coach's job is to win football games.

**EXAMPLE: I know he's popular because he drives a Porsche.**

### *Reasoning*

- A. If: Driving a Porsche makes one popular.
- B. If: He is driving a Porsche.
- C. Then: I know he's popular because he drives a Porsche.

Looking at the examples above, do you agree with all of the "If" statements? If not, why not? What unstated assumptions are being made in some of these "If" statements? How can a statement like, "Driving a Porsche makes one popular." seem true even if it isn't? Why is this important to consider when you read other's arguments or when you write your own argument?

### *Practice on your own:*

1. The president hasn't done anything about unemployment, so he has no sympathy for the poor.
2. Too much smoking ruins a person's health, so you know Ellen is in bad shape.
3. Today's prisons are practically like country clubs.
4. Because several new schools have been built in the past few years, Detroit has an outstanding school system.
5. Imported cars are higher in quality than American cars.
6. Mr. Smith got the contract, so you know he paid a few people off.
7. Arturo Gonzalez should be elected to the city council because he is a successful real estate developer.

# Analyzing an Argument

**Directions:** To prepare for writing your own argument, it is helpful to analyze the arguments of others. For this activity, read an argument (article, essay, speech, etc.) and attempt to answer the following questions. These questions will help you understand the writer’s argument—how it is developed, and the unstated assumptions he/she might be making. They will also help you “dissect” an argument so you can better determine your own position to the writer’s claim.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Position and Purpose

What is the writer’s position or claim? Why does he/she think it is important?

What does the writer hope to accomplish with his/her claim? What benefits would be realized or what problems would be eliminated?

What arguments does the writer offer FOR his/her claim (the pros)?

What evidence (facts/statistics, personal examples, expert testimony) does the writer offer in support of his/her arguments?

What arguments AGAINST his/her claim does the writer recognize? What are the counterarguments? What does the writer say in rebuttal to these counterarguments?

### **Writer**

What are the writer's qualifications for discussing this issue? What is the writer's knowledge of the subject?

What are the limitations of the writer's knowledge?

What is the writer's personal stake in the argument's outcome?

Other relevant information about the writer:

### **Reader**

What does the writer assume about the reader's age, educational background, occupation, marital status, and political preference?

How does the writer appeal to his/her audience (with logic, emotion, and/or ethics)? How effective are these appeals? Did you respond to them positively?

What might the reader stand to gain or lose?

Other relevant information about (writer's apparent assumptions about) the reader:

### **Your Opinion**

Based on your answers above, how credible is this writer's argument? What would the writer need to do in his/her argument to make it more convincing?

Pros/Cons for My Position	
Statement of position (claim):	
<b>PROS:</b> What arguments support your claim?	<b>EVIDENCE:</b> What evidence supports your arguments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal Examples</li><li>• Expert Testimony</li><li>• Facts/Statistics</li></ul>
<b>CONS (COUNTERARGUMENTS):</b> What arguments might others make against your claim?	<b>REBUTTALS:</b> What can you say to refute the cons (counterarguments)?

# Traditional Pattern for Organizing the Argument

**NOTE:** each of these elements is not necessarily its own paragraph.

- **INTRODUCTION:** Draw your reader into the argument. Build common ground, establish your tone and style, and establish your credentials (tap into ethical appeal). Clarify why the issue is important.
- **STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** Tell the “story” behind the argument and give any necessary background information. Clarify the issue and define it in terms that are favorable to your point of view.
- **CLAIM:** State your main position (like a thesis in a thesis/support essay).
- **REBUTTAL:** Examine opposing arguments (counterarguments) and offer rebuttal. Try to tear down the opposition’s argument by showing how it is faulty in its logic, how it jumps to conclusions that aren’t supported, how it appeals to emotions, but isn’t logical, etc.
- **CONFIRMATION:** Develop and support your own case. Use examples, facts, and statistics to back up your claims. Be logical in your presentation of the evidence and your analysis of it. Your confirmation will be several paragraphs long. You should consider in what order to present your evidence. One effective way is to arrange your points in this order:
  1. Second most important point
  2. Points of lesser importance
  3. Most important point

Starting and ending with your most important points helps to keep them clear in the audience’s mind—it drives home your argument.
- **DIGRESSION (OPTIONAL):** This is the place to include a touching or entertaining anecdote designed to appeal to the ethical or emotional side of your audience. It may appear that you are digressing from your argument, but, in fact, you are making it even more solid. *This is optional.*
- **CONCLUSION: END STRONGLY!** Finish with conviction and passion. You might end with a review of your main points, a reference to something in your introduction, or a plea for action. You might also encourage your opposition to “jump ship” and come to your side!

**e** While this is a traditional organizational scheme for an argument, writers are not bound by this pattern. Writers can choose to organize their main points in other ways; variations of the traditional pattern are fine.

# Peer Response for the Argument

Author: \_\_\_\_\_ Responder: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Title/Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Form of the paper: ☐ essay ☐ letter ☐ speech ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

Audience for the paper: \_\_\_\_\_

*Keeping in mind the form I've chosen and my intended audience, please read the draft of my argument and do the following:*

## 1. Mark my draft in this way:

- Indicate those areas that are unclear or confusing by underlining them in my text.
- Indicate those areas that are especially well-expressed with a squiggly line under the text.

## 2. Respond in writing to the following questions:

- What appears to be my *claim (position/thesis)*? Write the statement here. How could I make it more clear and/or concise?
- To what extent (and how) does the introductory section *catch your attention*? What kind of tone do I set in the introduction? Do I make the topic seem important? What suggestions can you offer?
- Have I provided enough *background knowledge and context* for you (and my intended audience)? What additional background information would be useful?

- What possible *oppositions* (*counterarguments*) to my case have I included? List them here. For which ones have I offered sufficiently strong and clear *rebuttals*? Where can I improve my rebuttals to make my argument stronger?
  
  - What are the *main reasons/points* I use in the “confirmation” section to *support my claim*? List them briefly here. Which one(s) seem to be the strongest points? Which ones seem weak, and how might I improve them?
  
  - What strategy do I seem to use in my *conclusion*? (Repeat points? Refer back to something in the introduction? Urge reader to take action?) How might I strengthen the conclusion?
- 3. What *questions* do you have about the content of my argument that might help me make myself more clear and/or more persuasive?**

# Argument: Rubric

This rubric should give you ideas about writing and evaluating arguments.

<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Effective</i>	<i>Somewhat Effective</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly explains the nature and importance of the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly explains the nature of the issue and begins to make a case for its importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not clearly or directly convey the nature or importance of the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not clearly convey the nature and importance of the issue</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a clear, well-defined claim (position of the writer on the issue)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presents a clear claim (position of the writer on the issue)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attempts to present the writer's position, but it is general and/or indecisive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to present the writer's position on the issue</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides thorough support for writer's claim in the form of personal anecdotes/examples, statistics/facts, examples, and/or quotes from respected authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides adequate support for writer's claim in the form of personal anecdotes/examples, statistics/facts, examples and/or quotes from respected authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides limited and/or insufficiently developed support for writer's position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides insufficient or no support for writer's position</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>considers all major counterarguments and rebuts them in a convincing and reasonable manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>considers most major counterarguments and adequately rebuts them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to consider some important counter arguments and/or to rebut those that are included; rebuttals may not dismiss counterarguments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fails to consider counterarguments and offers little or no rebuttal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fully establishes the authority and credibility of the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes some credibility and authority of the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes little credibility or authority of the writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does not establish the credibility or authority of the writer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a tone that is diplomatic yet forceful and appropriate for the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a tone that attempts diplomacy and forcefulness and is generally appropriate for the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an inconsistent or wavering tone that affects its appropriateness for the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has an inappropriate tone for the audience</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a highly developed and logical organizational scheme that is effective for the argument and the audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized appropriately in support of the argument and audience; the organization enhances the strength of the argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized in an inconsistent manner or is somewhat inappropriate for the argument or audience; the organization does not enhance the argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is organized inappropriately or ineffectively for the given argument and audience; the organization detracts from the argument</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains interesting and varied vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains workable, but not fully effective, vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains simplistic and/or incorrect vocabulary that interferes with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains varied sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains sound sentence structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure demonstrates problems and/or lacks variety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sentence structure problems interfere with communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has few, if any, mechanical errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may have some mechanical errors, but none that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has some mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has many mechanical errors that interfere with understanding</li> </ul>

## Ways to Respond to a Quotation

**D**uring a timed writing situation, you may be asked to respond to a quotation in one of the following ways. You should become familiar with the expectations of each of these prompts and practice responding as described below.

**AGREE/DISAGREE:** You agree or disagree with the quotation based on factual or practical evidence. (Occasionally a response may do both [agree/disagree], but it should be weighted toward one or the other.) You must supply some kind of evidence to back your position.

**REACT:** You react to the content of the quotation not only on a factual level, but on an emotional level, as well. Your response can be grounded in opinion and/or spiritual/ethical/patriotic beliefs.

**CONNECT:** You see a similarity between the quotation and a personal experience/historical event/fictional situation. Your response details the similarities and describes any other connections that you might want to include.

**INTERPRET:** You rephrase the quotation in your own words. Your response includes an explanation of the quotation's meaning and often expands on the original idea. This approach is usually combined with one of the other responses listed here.

**COMPARE/CONTRAST:** This response is usually used with two or more quotations that are centered on a theme. Generally, you compare and contrast the ideas stated in each quotation.

**APPLY:** You describe how the quotation relates to a selected work of literature, art, or popular culture. Generally, the quotation supports, expands, or illustrates an aspect of the selected work, such as theme or character personality.

**REFLECT:** You use the quotation as a springboard to examine new ideas, reevaluate currently held views, or question the position of the speaker.

## Academic Vocabulary

*The following words are commonly used in academic settings and especially in academic writing. Use this page to help you interpret writing prompts and tasks.*

Analyze	Examine carefully in order to determine why something has happened. Separate or distinguish the elements of anything complex. Break the subject down into parts, and explain the various parts.
Assess	Examine critically, and estimate the merit, significance, or value.
Compare/Contrast	Point out how things are similar and how they are different.
Consider	Think about and include information about.
Criticize/Critique	Give your judgment or opinion; show something's good or bad points. Give evidence to justify opinion.
Define	Give the meaning of something with enough detail to show that you really understand it.
Describe	Explain or write about; give a picture or account of in words. Tell how it looks or happened, including how, where, who, and why.
Diagram	Make a drawing or outline of something, and label its parts.
Discuss	Give reasons with details.
Effect	Whatever is produced by a cause; something made to happen by a person or thing; result.
Enumerate	Count off or list examples, reasons, causes, or effects one by one.
Evaluate	Give your opinion of the value of a subject; discuss its good and bad points, strengths and weaknesses.
Explain	Make clear or interpret the reasons why a situation exists or is happening.
Identify	List and explain.
Illustrate	Make the point or idea clear by giving examples.
Interpret	Give the meaning; use examples and personal comments to make clear.
Justify	Prove by giving reasons.
List	List without details.
Outline	Make an organized listing of the important points of a subject.
Prove	Show that something is true by giving evidence and reasons.
Relate	Show the connections between things or how one thing causes another.
Respond	State your overall reaction (response) to the content, and then support your response with specific reasons and examples, referring back to the reading.
Solve	Come up with a solution based on given facts and your knowledge.
State	Give the main points in brief, clear form.
Summarize	Organize and bring together the main points, keeping out personal opinions.
Support	Back up the statements with facts and proof.
Synthesize	Pull together "parts" to make a "whole"—this requires looking for common attributes among the parts in order to link them together.

# A Guide to Writing the Timed Essay

## Prewriting

Use *approximately 1/6 of the allotted time* (10 minutes for a 60-minute essay; 5 minutes for a 30-minute essay) to:

### 1. Dissect the prompt.

Use at least two of the following strategies:

- A. Carefully dissect the writing prompt by underlining or circling the key words and making sure you understand the academic vocabulary.
- B. Rephrase the prompt in your own words (as a question, if possible).
- C. Draw an organizer or create a visual representation showing how the key words/ideas are related to one another.

### 2. Brainstorm and choose a topic.

- A. List or cluster topic ideas for the essay.
- B. Select a topic.

### 3. Plan the essay.

- A. Create a cluster, write an outline (remember three-part essay structure), or jot down notes (phrases, single words, abbreviations, etc.), detailing information that will be included in the essay. Make sure you are addressing the writing prompt—go back and check your outline against your prompt-dissection work.
- B. Follow these tips as you plan:
  - If a question asks for facts, make a quick list of facts that relate to the subject or question.
  - If you're asked for an opinion, write that opinion in the center of a cluster bubble, and then add ideas, feelings, and support for your opinion in connecting bubbles.
  - If you're asked to compare and contrast two items, look at your notes for all the details that show how they are alike, and then list the details that show how they are different. A Venn diagram might help you organize these details.
  - Put your thoughts in order. Identify the main point(s) you'll include in your answer first, and then add all the supporting information and details. (Use a formal outline if it helps you.) You can change the order as you write, but it helps to organize your ideas before you begin.

## Writing the Essay

Use *approximately 4/6 of the allotted time* (40 minutes for a 60-minute essay; 20 minutes for a 30-minute essay) to:

### 4. Keep your audience in mind, and write to that audience.

**5. Write a logical, well-organized essay using your cluster, outline, or notes.**

- A. Introduce your topic by rephrasing the question prompt or repeating key words from the prompt in your first sentence. Get right to the heart of your essay with a clear thesis; do NOT write a lengthy introduction and do NOT repeat yourself.
- B. Completely explain each point you are making before going on to the next one. If you skip around, your answer will seem confusing and incomplete. Make sure each topic sentence relates to your thesis.
- C. Support your general statements with details, examples, and facts. Use specific people and events to show that you know your subject and to help your audience follow your line of thinking/reasoning. You must use examples, even with a short essay. If your answer is two sentences long, make the first sentence a thesis and the second an example.
- D. Don't be afraid to "think on paper." Some of your best ideas may develop as you write.
- E. When you finish making a point, make it clear that you are moving on to another point by using transition words, such as, *besides*, *in addition*, *next*, *however*, and *although*.
- F. When you feel you've covered everything, conclude in a sentence or two. *Don't simply repeat your opening sentence*. Use some of the main ideas you brought up in your essay.
- G. Stay aware of the time.

**Reviewing, Editing, and Revising**

*Use approximately 1/6 of the allotted time (10 minutes for a 60-minute essay; 5 minutes for a 30-minute essay) to:*

**6. Reread your completed essay and revise.**

- A. Make sure you have answered the question and have not strayed from the prompt.
- B. Look for mistakes you might have made on the facts (dates, names, etc.). If you need to make a correction, draw a single line through the old information and write the new information just above it. Don't waste time scribbling out old information.
- C. Check for complete ideas, clear thoughts, and details/explanations.

**7. Be sure your paper is easy to read so your ideas stand out clearly**

- A. Proofread for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors.
- B. Neatly make any needed corrections.