Original English Department Handouts

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BHSU English 201 Goals and Objectives

SPEARFISH CAMPUS, ELLSWORTH CAMPUS, AND WDTI CAMPUS

Ideas/Content

- Writer provides relevant, telling, quality, accurate details;
- Writer generates insights in response to the prompt that have meaning to others;
- Writer appropriately uses inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning;
- Writer understands the importance of evidence in supporting arguments, making decisions, and problem solving.

Voice

- Writer maintains a distinctive voice even when integrating the work of others into the text;
- Writer expands and builds on his/her personal authority through formal research.

Organization

- Writer focuses the topic so that it is suitable for the length required;
- Writer consistently uses appropriate, effective transitional devices;
- Writer consistently uses a variety of methods of organizing information, choosing the most appropriate method to accomplish the purpose of the essay;
- Writer introduces, integrates, and explains the significance to the thesis of quotations.

Development

- Writer consistently develops idea logically and without unnecessary repetition;
- Writer consistently provides believable, correct, substantiated, properly documented information;
- Writer consistently develops main points completely and thoroughly using details, examples, reasons, and citations from readings;
- Writer uses a balance of sources, including traditional library resources and online texts;
- Writer appropriately integrates secondary information into his/her own text;
- Writer can distinguish when to use paraphrasing, summarizing, or direct quotation;
- Writer can objectively summarize the ideas of sources.

Critical Thinking Skills

- Student can synthesize a variety of sources to construct a logical argument;
- Student understands the prompt perceptively and responds to it in a sophisticated manner.

Audience Awareness

- Writer consistently analyzes and meets the needs of a specific audience, utilizing a tone and level of formality which meet the expectations of the audience;
- Writer chooses language appropriate for the topic and audience;
- Writer chooses information and arguments that are credible to the audience;
- Writer acknowledges other points of view through anticipating, responding to, and/or refuting them.

Sentence Structure

- Writer consistently uses good sentence structure;
- Writer effectively uses compound and complex sentences;
- Writer appropriately uses a variety of sentence patterns.

Word Choice
• Writer demonstrates a clear sense of denotation and connotation;
• Writer chooses words that move the reader to a new vision of the ideas presented.

Grammar/Usage/Mechanics Conventions

• Student consistently writes essays that are mechanically sound and that exhibit standard written English usage;
• Student consistently uses acceptable manuscript conventions of quotation, documentation, bibliography, and formatting.

Research Skills

• Writer effectively integrates sources into the text;
• Writer consistently uses appropriate citation formats;
• Writer is aware of the kinds of information provided by various types of sources, i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary sources;
• Writer can effectively evaluate the worth of sources.

Writing Process and Affective Issues

• Writer has developed a writing process that is efficient and effective for a variety of writing situations;
• Writer is proficient in giving and receiving peer feedback on writing;
• Writer can think in terms of sections as well as paragraphs for longer papers;
• Student can take responsibility for his/her own learning;
• Student is confident in his/her ability to write;
• Student recognizes the intellectual rigor of academic discourse.

Computer Literacy

• Student is proficient with researching using the library, the internet, and interlibrary loan systems;
• Writer can search for information using the online library catalog, online periodicals and databases, and search engines;
• Writer understands the ethics of information use, especially in regard to plagiarism and citation.

Genre and Length

• Writer produces 4 essays at least 5 pages long and writes a research paper at least 5 pages long utilizing adequate sources of a variety of types; or 25 pages of polished prose including a research paper at least 5 pages long utilizing adequate sources of a variety of types;
• Writer drafts, revises, and edits essays of argumentation that use sources effectively to support the thesis;
• Writer writes to and from sources.
Commas

Writers of all levels of skill have struggled for years with the problem of where to place or where not to place the comma. Recently Ramsay MacMullen, emeritus professor of history and classics at Yale University, examined the roles of punctuation and voice in expository writing in *Literary Imaginations*, a new journal of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics. MacMullen states that there have, historically, been two main schools of thought on the role of punctuation.

The first, and oldest, dictates that the marks should stand for how a speaker would articulate the words, and at what pace. In other words, Mr. MacMullen writes, "Our thinking about how we write should properly begin with how we speak."

The later, early-20th-century, view suggests that punctuation should offer only visual and grammatical guidance. For as Mr. MacMullen summarizes, "Writing is just that, a visual thing; and it is the logic of grammar that writers must invoke to help them out with commas and so on, not how they speak."

The 70's challenged that stern notion, and once again, Mr. MacMullen notes, "Speech recovered its primacy over writing." No less a writer than Eudora Welty wrote, "Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line I didn't hear. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me... I have supposed, but never found out, that this is the case with all readers -- to read as listeners -- and with all writers, to write as listeners." Indeed.

Physiology reveals that there is an "inner ear": Speech organs are stimulated during reading, or what Mr. MacMullen terms "the mind's eye, the nerves and muscles of gesticulation." Science has proven what 17th-century literary scholars believed: "Readers inwardly turn writing into speech, so far as they are able."

The current wisdom holds that how we would speak the sentence should guide us on where to place the comma. This theory, however, does not always work in practice. We tend to put in either too many commas or not enough commas. To clear up the confusion, we will have to turn to rules. Happily that is not a daunting task as five rules suggest where over 90% of the commas should go.

**Commas are used to separate two main clauses.**

When a coordinating conjunction -- *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet* -- connects two or more independent clauses -- word groups that could stand alone as separate sentences -- a comma must precede the coordinating conjunction.

- It was cold this morning, but my dog still wanted to stay outside a long time.

1. To place this comma, look at your writing for the coordinating conjunctions -- *and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*.

2. Then look at the word groups on either side of the conjunction. If those word groups could stand on their own as sentences, that is if they are independent clauses, then a comma must precede the coordinating conjunction.

3. If only one word group is an independent clause or if the word groups are not independent clauses, then no comma is needed.

**Commas are used to set off introductory elements.**

Commas are used to tell readers that the introductory information is completed and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin. Commas are used if:

*The introductory information is a subordinate clause.*

A subordinate clause has both a subject and verb but can not stand by itself as a sentence because it is preceded by a subordinator such as because, since, when, while, etc.

- When I got to the game, my friends had not yet arrived.
The introductory information is a phrase longer than 4 words long.

A phrase can be of several types and purposes, but what distinguishes a phrase from a clause is that a phrase does not contain both a subject and a verb.

- After winning another close game, we all celebrated by eating ice cream.
- Thinking he was the center of attraction, the movie star smiled and waved at everyone.

The introductory information is a transitional expression.

A transitional expression serves as a bridge between sentences.

- As a result, I gained 2 pounds celebrating the win.

Commas are used to set off interrupting elements. These interrupting elements can be nonrestrictive elements.

A nonrestrictive element describes a noun or pronoun whose meaning has already been clearly defined or limited. Because it contains nonessential or parenthetical information, a nonrestrictive element is set off with commas.

- The recipe called for zucchini, which I had in abundance.
- The bread she served, zucchini bread, was delicious.
- My garden, which is located in my back yard, produced lots of zucchini this year.

The interrupting elements can be parenthetical expressions.

Parenthetical expressions provide supplemental comments or information but interrupt the flow of a sentence or appear as afterthoughts.

- My dog, so far as we know, is a shepherd/chow mix.
- We will be home by seven, give or take a few minutes.

The interruption elements can be nouns of direct address, interrogative tags, or mild interjections.

- Thank you, Dr. Doolittle, for that information.
- Yes, the games are at home this weekend.
- The movie was interesting, wasn’t it?
- Well, I’m not sure I would agree with that.

Commas are used to separate items in a series.

When you list three or more items, separate them with commas.

- Sunny skies, dry air, and wide open spaces are some of the pleasant features of western South Dakota.

Commas are used between coordinate adjectives not joined by and.

When two more adjectives each modify a noun separately, the adjectives need to be separated by commas.
· Mary became a strong, confident, independent woman.
Creating Parallel Structure

If two or more ideas are parallel, they are easier to grasp when expressed in parallel grammatical form. Single words should be balanced with single words, phrases with phrases, clauses with clauses.

**Balance parallel ideas in a series.**

- Not -- Abused children commonly exhibit one or more of the following symptoms: withdrawal, rebelliousness, restlessness, and they are depressed.
- But -- Abused children commonly exhibit one or more of the following symptoms: withdrawal, rebelliousness, restlessness, and depression.

**Balance parallel ideas presented as pairs.**

**Balance parallel ideas linked with coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet).**

- Not -- At Lincoln High School, vandalism can result in suspension or even being expelled from school.
- But -- At Lincoln High School, vandalism can result in suspension or even expulsion from school.

**Balance parallel ideas linked with correlative conjunctions (either . . or; neither . . nor; not only . . but also; both . . and; whether . . or).**

- Not -- Thomas Edison was not only a prolific inventor but also was a successful entrepreneur.
- But -- Thomas Edison was not only a prolific inventor but also a successful entrepreneur.

**Balance comparisons linked with than or as.**

- Not -- Mother could not persuade me that giving is as much a joy as to receive.
- But -- Mother could not persuade me that giving is as much a joy as receiving.

**Repeat function words (by, to, that, because, etc.) to clarify parallels.**

- Not -- In an attempt to break their bad habit, many smokers try switching to a brand they find distasteful or a low tar and nicotine cigarette.
- But -- In an attempt to break their bad habit, many smokers try switching to a brand they find distasteful or to a low tar and nicotine cigarette.
Effective Use of Pronouns

Make pronouns, words that substitute for nouns, and their antecedents, that which they substitute for or refer to, agree in number (singular or plural).

- The teacher graded her students’ papers.
- The students wrote their papers.

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things; they are words such as anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, none, no one, somebody, someone, something. They are usually treated as singular.

- In this class everyone is expected to do his or her own work.

When the plural pronoun refers mistakenly to a singular indefinite pronoun, you can usually choose one of three options for revision:

- Replace the plural pronoun with he or she or his or her.
- Make the antecedent plural.
- Rewrite the sentence so that no problem of agreement arises.

Examples of revised sentences

- (Incorrect) When someone is tired, they are more likely to be forgetful.
- When someone is tired, he or she is more likely to be forgetful.
- When people are tired, they are more likely to be forgetful.
- Someone who his tired is more likely to be forgetful

Generic nouns

A generic noun represents a typical member of a group, such as a typical student, or any member of a group, such as any lawyer. Although generic nouns may seem to have plural meanings, they are singular.

- Every student must study every day if he or she wants to do well in college.

When the plural pronoun refers mistakenly to a singular generic noun, you can usually choose one of three options for revision:

- Replace the plural pronoun with he or she or his or her.
- Make the antecedent plural.
- Rewrite the sentence so that no problem of agreement arises.

Examples of revised sentences

- (Incorrect) An athlete must train daily if they want to succeed.
- An athlete must train daily if he or she wants to succeed.
- Athletes must train daily if they want to succeed.
- Athletes train daily to succeed.

Collective nouns

Collective nouns such as jury, committee, audience, crowd, class, troop, family, team, and couple name a class or group. If the group functions as a unit, treat the noun as singular; if the members of the group function individually, treat the noun as plural.
- As a unit: The committee reached its decision after much discussion
- As individuals: The committee must put their signatures on the papers.

**Compound antecedents**

Treat compound antecedents joined by *and* as plural.

- Joanne and Jim go to Arizona in the winter, where they have a second home.

With compound antecedents joined by *or* or *nor*, make the pronoun agree with the nearer antecedent.

- Neither the dog nor the cats are happy in their new home.
**Introductions and Conclusions**

**Introductions:**

The introduction guides the readers' attention to the idea you are trying to present. It usually begins with a general statement and then becomes more specific as it progresses. It can also begin with a story that demonstrates the point you want to make. The introduction paragraph should:

- appeal to readers
- announce the subject of the essay
- provide necessary background information
- help readers to anticipate the tone and substance of the essay
- give the readers a sense of what is to come
- provide readers with a framework so they can efficiently reconstruct the means you intend
- make a commitment that the rest of the essay delivers on
- state the problem of purpose for writing
- end with your thesis sentence

The introduction can contain:

- a startling statistic or unusual fact
- a vivid example
- a description
- a paradoxical statement
- a hypothetical situation
- a definition of terms
- a quotation
- a question
- an analogy
- a joke or an anecdote

The introduction should NOT

- apologize
- begin with gross overstatements
- begin with cliches
- include a signpost ("In this essay, I will...")

**Conclusions:**

Even as the introductory paragraph funneled the reader into the ideas you are presenting, the concluding paragraph is meant to release them into the world again. It can:

- restate or summarize the point you are making
- end with an image, example, metaphor, pithy saying, or stylistically dramatic sentence which captures the essence of the main point
- motivate the reader to do something
- explore the implications of your main idea
- pose a question for further study
- offer advice
- convey a sense of completion
- revisit the story you began with

A conclusion should NOT:

- introduce new ideas
- apologize for what you have said
- end too quickly
- contradict your thesis
- get off track
**Modifiers**

An **adjective** is a word used to modify, or describe, nouns and pronouns. They ordinarily precede nouns, but can also function as subject complements following linking verbs. An adjective usually answers one of these questions: which one? What kind of? How many?

- The blonde woman won the race.
- Her hair is blonde.
- She looked cautious as she began the race.

An **adverb** is a word used to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They often end in –ly. They usually answer one of these questions: When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? How often? To what degree?

- A coach must be sure her runners are well prepared for the race.
- The long distance runner looked cautiously for the turns in the course.
- Be extremely good, and you will be very lonesome.

**Adverbs** can precede the word they modify or come after the word they modify or come at another place in the sentence. If the modifier limits the word it modifies, it should be placed in front of the word.

- Lasers only destroy the target, leaving the surrounding healthy tissue intact.
- Lasers destroy only the target, leaving the surrounding healthy tissue intact.

**Avoid dangling modifiers**

A dangling modifier, usually a word group such as a verbal phrase, fails to refer logically to any word in the sentence. When a sentence opens with such a modifier, readers expect the subject of the next clause to name the actor. If it doesn’t, the modifier dangles.

- **Not** Opening the window to let out a huge bumblebee, the car accidentally swerved into an oncoming car.
- **But** When the driver opened the window to let out a huge bumblebee, the car accidentally swerved into an oncoming car.

**Dangling modifiers**

- Deciding to join the navy, the recruiter enthusiastically pumped Erik’s hand. (Was it the recruiter who decided to join the navy or Erik?)
- Upon entering the doctor’s office, a skeleton caught my attention. (A skeleton entered the doctor’s office?)
- To please the children, some fireworks were set off a day early. (Who set off the fireworks?)
- Though only sixteen, UCLA accepted Martha’s application. (Is UCLA only sixteen?)

To repair a dangling modifier, either

- Name the actor in the subject of the sentence, or
- Name the actor in the modifier.

**Revised sentences**

- When Erik decided to join the navy, the recruiter enthusiastically pumped his hand.
- When I entered the doctor’s office, a skeleton caught my attention.
- To please the children, we set off some fireworks a day early.
- Though she was only sixteen, UCLA accepted Martha’s application.

Be sure modifying phrases and clauses are placed so that your meaning is clear to the reader.
- The king returned to the clinic where he had undergone heart surgery in 1992 in a limousine sent by the White House. (His heart surgery was done in a White House limousine?)
- The robber was described as a six-foot-tall man with a mustache weighing 150 pounds. (His mustache weighs 150 pounds?)
- The exchange students we met for coffee occasionally questioned us about our latest slang. (Did they meet us occasionally or question us occasionally?)
**Organization of the Essay**

Most academic writing, no matter what its purpose, can be organized following a pattern referred to as The Five Paragraph Expository Essay form. This is the method of organizing written material that is often taught to high school students. It is expected that college writers will be able to create a form that suits the material they are writing about, instead of adapting the material to the form; however, you may want to use this form until you are more comfortable organizing your ideas. No matter what format you follow to present your information, academic writing conventions expect a certain pattern within the paragraphs of the essay.

**The Five Paragraph Essay Format for Writing Academic Essays**

**First Paragraph – The Introduction**

The introduction funnels the readers’ attention to the idea you are trying to present. It usually begins with a general statement and then becomes more specific as it progresses. It can also begin with a story that demonstrates the point you want to make. The introductory paragraph should be at least 4 sentences and 50 - 150 words long and may be much longer. The introductory paragraph

- appeals to readers
- helps readers to anticipate the tone and substance of the essay
- gives readers a sense of what is to come
- provides readers with a framework so they can efficiently reconstruct the meanings you intend
- makes a commitment that the rest of the essay delivers on
- ends with your **thesis sentence**.

See *A Writer's Reference* pp. 13 - 17 for more information on introductory paragraphs.

**The Thesis Sentence**

Your thesis sentence

- narrows the topic to a single central idea that you want readers to gain from your essay
- names the topic and asserts something specific and significant about it
- provides a concise preview of how you will arrange your ideas in the essay.

See *A Writer's Reference* pp. 15 - 16 for more information on developing your thesis sentence.

**The Body Paragraphs**

Each of the body paragraphs discusses in depth a particular part of your argument. Paragraphs are used to mark boundaries between your ideas. Paragraphs in an academic essay are at least 5 sentences and 100 - 200 words long and should be longer. The paragraphs themselves follow a pattern:

1. The **topic sentence** declares the idea that will be discussed in the paragraph
2. A **defining sentence** further defines or narrows the idea to be discussed
3. **Examples, illustrations or discussion** are used to fully explain and develop the idea
4. A **concluding sentence** wraps up the ideas presented, restates the idea that has been discussed, relates the idea to the thesis of the essay, and/or presents a **transition** into the next idea.

See *A Writer's Reference* pp. 25 - 36 for more information on developing paragraphs.

**Transitions**

Transitions are words or phrases that move the reader easily through your ideas. They are a way of explaining your mental moves to the reader.

See *A Writer's Reference* p. 35 for more information on transitions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logical Type</th>
<th>Epitomized by</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>then, next, finally, afterwards, eventually, later, meanwhile, soon, presently, while, immediately, since, formerly, previously, last, at last, at length, subsequently, simultaneously, in the meantime, first, second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>furthermore, in addition</td>
<td>furthermore, in addition, and, besides, likewise, moreover, similarly, again, equally important, too, what is more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>but, however</td>
<td>but, however, on the other hand, at another extreme, yet, still, instead, despite this, nonetheless, for all that, on the contrary, conversely, although, notwithstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causation</td>
<td>therefore, because</td>
<td>therefore, because, for, as a result, accordingly, because of this, hence, consequently, thus, so, if . . . then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>for example, that is</td>
<td>for example, for instance, in particular, specifically, to illustrate, to demonstrate, that is, namely, in other words, as a matter of fact, indeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternation</td>
<td>or</td>
<td>or, either/or, another possibility, as an alternative, neither/nor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>in conclusion</td>
<td>in conclusion, in short, on the whole, to sum up, in brief, to summarize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: some of the words and phrases cited here actually fit more than one category, depending on how they are used. The words in each category, moreover, vary considerably in their connotations. Like a thesaurus, this list should be used with care, especially if you are not familiar with the normal use of the word or phrase you are considering.

**Conclusion**

Even as the introductory paragraph funneled the reader into the ideas you are presenting, the concluding paragraph is meant to release them into the world again. The concluding paragraph should be at least 4 sentences and 50 - 150 words long and can be much longer. It can

- restate or summarize the point you are making
- end with an image, example, metaphor, pithy saying or stylistically dramatic sentence which captures the essence of your main point
- state explicitly what you want
- motivate the reader to do something
- explore the implications of your main idea
- revisit the story you began with.

See *A Writer’s Reference* pp. 16 - 17 for an explanation of concluding paragraphs.
**Other Types of Punctuation**

**Semicolon**

- The semicolon is used to separate major sentence elements of equal grammatical rank.

The semicolon is used between closely related independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

- Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice.

The semicolon is used between independent clauses linked with a transitional expression.

- Many teams were equally matched; in fact, any of them could have won the tournament.
- I should have chosen Michigan State to win the tournament; however, I foolishly pinned my hopes on Ohio State.

The semicolon is used between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

- Duke University in Chapel Hill, NC; the University of Maryland in College Park, MD; and Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI all have strong basketball programs.

**Colon**

The colon is used to primarily call attention to the words that follow it.

The colon is used after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, an appositive, or a quotation.

- I enjoy many hobbies: watching basketball, knitting, and quilting, to name a few.
- Consider the words of John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

**Apostrophe**

The apostrophe is used to indicate that a noun is possessive, that is, to indicate ownership.

If the noun does not end in *s*, add ’s

- The driver’s side
- The children’s money

If the noun is plural and ends in *s*, add only the apostrophe

- Both diplomats’ briefcases

Use an apostrophe to mark contractions

- It’s = it is
- Can’t = can not

**Quotation marks**

Quotation marks are used to enclose direct quotations.

- “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson.
Single quotation marks are used to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

- According to Paul Eliott, Eskimo hunters “chant an ancient magic song to the seal they are after: ‘Beast of the sea! Come and place yourself before me in the early morning!’”

Quotation marks are used around the titles of newspaper and magazine articles, poems, short stories, songs, episodes of television and radio programs, and chapters or subdivisions of books.

**Question mark**

A question mark completes a direct question.

- What is the horsepower of your new truck?

A polite question written in the form or a question is usually followed by a question mark, although usage varies.

- Would you please send me your catalog of lilies?
- Would you please send me your catalog of lilies.

**Exclamation point**

An exclamation point is used after a word group or sentence that expresses exceptional feeling or deserves special emphasis.

- Do not overuse the exclamation point!!

**Dash**

The dash is used to set off parenthetical material that deserves emphasis.

- Everything that went wrong – from cutting my hand to losing the cat – was blamed on our move.

The dash is used to set off appositives that contain commas.

- In my hometown the basic needs of people – food, clothing, and shelter – are less costly than in Los Angeles.

The dash is used to prepare for a list, a restatement, an amplification, or a dramatic shift in tone or thought.

Use the dash sparingly. It is better to emphasize the ideas by using strong verbs rather than the dash.

**Parentheses**

Parentheses enclose supplemental material, minor digressions, and afterthoughts.

- After taking her temperature, pulse, and blood pressure (routine vital signs), the nurse made Becky as comfortable as possible.
- The weights James was able to move (not lift, mind you) were measured in ounces.

Use parentheses sparingly. The information contained within the parentheses is easily ignored; it is a whisper to the reader. If the information is important enough to be in the piece, it probably needs to be integrated into the text.

- After taking the routine vital signs of temperature, pulse, and blood pressure, the nurse made Becky as comfortable as possible.
The weights James was able to not lift but move were measured in ounces.
Prewriting Strategies

Good writers do a lot of writing before they begin to write the actual text they are working on. Prewriting strategies are a series of different methods good writers use to generate ideas for their text. You may be familiar with some of the strategies, but some of them may be new to you. Try the different strategies as you generate ideas for your papers this semester. When you find one that helps you generate a lot of good, in-depth ideas, use that strategy to your advantage.

Listing

Jot down ideas as they occur to you, rejecting nothing. Write quickly, using words or phrases. The aim here is to write down as much as possible.

Revisit your list, looking for similarities or opposites or ideas that seem attractive to you. Then either list again on your chosen topic, listing details this time, or write a scratch outline from the list.

See A Writer's Reference p. 5 for an explanation of listing.

Clustering

Make a mental map of your ideas. When you find similarities, group them together. When you come upon opposites, create a new branch on your web.

See A Writer's Reference p. 6 for an explanation of clustering.

Sketching

This is another way of trying to visualize abstract ideas. A sketch can be an actual drawing or a chart, a diagram, a floor plan, a street plan, etc. Use a sketch to think on paper and to generate ideas and details. Your drawing does not have to be professional; crude is okay.

Collaborating

Talk with someone else about your topic. When you sit down with friends to discuss writing ideas, the give and take of conversation stimulates your mind. You may at first only have vague ideas but talking about these ideas with others can help you focus and sharpen your thinking. It becomes a way of verbalizing ideas you didn’t know you had.

There are a few rules:

- Do not criticize anyone else’s ideas as dumb. That will only stifle the conversation. Instead, ask for elaboration or why they think that way. If your discussion partner says your ideas are dumb, find a new partner or go over this rule with them.
- Each person engaged in the discussion should feel responsible for the success of the conversation.
- No one person should dominate the conversation.
- Be explicit about the kind of help you need to develop your ideas better. Tell your collaborator what kind of help you need.
- Thank your collaborators for their help.

See A Writer's Reference p. 8 for an explanation of collaborating.

Questioning

Use a heuristic to question yourself about the topic. Probably the best known heuristic is the list of questions for journalists, the 5W's and an H:
Assignment-based questions

Asking yourself questions about the assignments is a good strategy to use for generating ideas for your essay. Use the following questions as a guideline:

- What is the assignment?
- What is the objective of the assignment?
- What was your first reaction to the assignment? Does that reaction match the objectives of the assignment?
- What readings is the assignment based on? What was your reaction to these readings? Can your reactions become part of the assignment?
- What issues relating to the assignment were discussed in class?

For more questions to assess the writing situation, see *A Writer's Handbook* pp. 4 - 5.

Outlining

Oh, that dreaded concept, outlining. Your outline does not have to be a formal outline with roman numerals, periods in the right place, correct spacing, etc. It can be an informal scratch outline that lays out for you the main ideas you will be covering and the details that support those ideas.

Outlines are especially important for long projects. If you have trouble organizing ideas, outlines are a big help. Try beginning with 2 x 5 cahier cards or small pieces of paper. Write one idea on each card, then arrange the cards into an appropriate order.

See *A Writer's Reference* pp. 10 - 13 for an explanation of outlining.

Freewriting

Just start writing. Start with where ever you are in the thinking process and just write what comes to you. Do not censor any ideas; there are no dumb ideas at this stage. Computers are especially good for this as they allow you to just type in what you think when it occurs to you. However you do it, you will need to revise later – to put like ideas together, to eliminate ideas that don’t belong, to expand on ideas that you have only touched on.

One variation of freewriting is called loop writing. Freewrite for a period of time – say 10 minutes. At the end of that time, read back through what you have written and choose an idea or topic that seem to be what you want to work more on. Use that topic to do more freewriting. As you do this sort of an exercise, you discover more information for yourself.

See *A Writer's Reference* p. 7 for an explanation of freewriting.

“On the run and in the tub”
Think about what you have to write whenever you have a few minutes. It might be while you are commuting or in that few minutes between classes or whenever you have some down time in your day. Just thinking about your topic will help you to discover more information. Some people are even able to completely outline and develop a short paper by just thinking it through. Don't let this be your only prewriting strategy, though.
Researching on the Internet

Evaluating Web Sites

Try these sites for information on how to evaluate the quality of internet resources.

Internet Detective
http://sosig.esrc.bris.ac.uk/desire/internet-detective.html
This is an interactive tutorial on evaluating the quality of Internet resources.

Widener University Site
http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfgram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/webeval.htm
This site, an excellent resource for evaluating web sources, divides web sites into types of pages depending on the reason for posting these pages and provides checklists for each kind of page. The following is a brief compilation of the information from the sites above. Traditional library method of evaluating ACCURACY

- How reliable and free from error is the information?
- Are there editors and fact checkers?

Evaluating Web Sites for ACCURACY

- Can the sources be verified?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other typographical errors?
- Are charts and graphs clearly labeled and easy to read?
- Is there a bibliography or links to other useful sites?

Traditional library method of evaluating AUTHORITY

- What are the author’s qualifications for writing on the subject?
- How reputable is the publisher?

Evaluating Web Sites for AUTHORITY

- Who is responsible for the web page? Can you trace the source to a person, company, organization, institution, etc.? Is that source reliable?
- Is the party responsible for the page an authoritative source of information?

Traditional library method of evaluating OBJECTIVITY

- Is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
- To what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience?

Evaluating Web Sites for OBJECTIVITY

- Are the biases of the person, company, organization, institution, etc. clearly stated?
- Is any advertising clearly differentiated from the informational content?
- Are editorials and opinion pieces clearly labeled?

Traditional library method of evaluating CURRENCY

- Is the content of the work up-to-date?
- Is the publication date clearly indicated?

Evaluating Web Sites for CURRENCY
Are there dates on the page to indicate when the page was written, when the page was first placed on the web, and/or when the page was last revised?
Are there any other indicators that the material is kept current?

Traditional library method of evaluating COVERAGE

- What topics are included in the work?
- To what depth are topics explored?

Evaluating Web Sites for COVERAGE

- Is there any indication that the page has been completed, and is not still under construction?
- Is the entire work available on the web or only parts of it?
- To what depth are topics explored?
- Is it clear what topics the page intends to address? Does it succeed or has something significant been left out?

Effective Search Strategies

The following sites present information on how to do an effective on line search for information.

Ziff-Davis University Site
http://ziff.shore.net/~courses/ist_rex/cws_app.htm
This site provides links to many of the most popular search tools available. Also included are direct links to each tool's help file or FAQ (where possible).

Kansas City Public Library
http://www.kcpl.lib.mo.us/search/srchengines.htm
This site provides an overview of current search engines and tips for using them effectively.

ProFusion
http://www.profusion.com/
ProFusion is a meta-search engine with intelligent agents. It looks on up to nine other search engines for leads and then uses its agents to winnow those down to the most useful and relevant set.

The following is a brief compilation of information from the sources above.

Effective Search Techniques

Know your search engine

- Catalogues
  Information is broken down into categories that will find a broad range of established sites.
- Search engines
  These use key words or phrases to search the web. Some look only at page titles and headers while others look through documents.
- Metasearch engines
  These search other search engines.

Learn how the search engine works

- Read the instructions and FAQs
- Know the strengths and weaknesses of each engine

Select your terms carefully

- Use exact, specific terms
- Do a subject word search in an online catalog of a library
- Some search engines provide alternative related keywords to search on
Know the limitations of the Web and of search engine

- The web does not contain all the information that can be found in libraries. Use it as a supplement to conventional research

**Additional Resources**

The following sites provide excellent information on how not to plagiarize when using sources.

**Plagiarism**

University of Delaware  
http://odin.english.udel.edu/wc/plagiarism.html  
This site defines plagiarism and presents strategies for writers to use to avoid plagiarism.

University of Toronto  
http://www.library.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html  
An excellent resource on how not to plagiarize.

**Resources for Writers and other Online Writing Assistance**

The following sites present other online information for writers.

Black Hills State University Online Writing Center  
http://www.bhsu.edu/writingcenter/index.html  
This site provides writing prompts, writing resources, and space for writers to workshop with other writers. It has been created and is maintained by students in our English Education program.

National Writing Center Association  
http://departments.colgate.edu/diw/NWCA.html  
This site provides links to most of the Online Writing Centers and lists the resources for writing, etc. that are available.

Information Quality WWW Virtual Library  
http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVL-InfoQuality.html  
This site is a resource for both evaluating and developing web resources.
Revising

Revision means to see again, so the idea of revision is to look carefully at all aspects of your paper so that you see it anew and can make significant and helpful revisions.

When to revise:

To really see a paper again, you will need to take a break between the drafting of the paper and the revising. That means you cannot expect to dash off a paper in an hour the hour before it is due and expect to have a good finished project. Instead you need to start the paper several days or even a week before it is due so you can leave yourself time between the drafting phase and the revision phase. This time allows you to really see the paper anew when you come to revise it.

How to revise:

To revise an essay, you need to focus your attention on various aspects of the essay. If you try to reorganize ideas, add details, craft a thesis, create complex sentences, and fix the spelling and comma errors all at one time, you will not do a good job of revising and you will wear your brain out doing it, as well. So follow the suggested steps to do a good job of revising your essay.

1. Does the writing fulfill the assignment?

   - Look back at the assignment sheet provided by the instructor or the notes provided in class. Have you done what was intended?
   - If you do not understand the assignment, ask the teacher or other students in your class for further explanation.
   - If your writing has not fulfilled the assignment, you will need to put this draft aside and do what you should have—or you can revise to meet the assignment.

2. Is there a recognizable thesis statement that accurately reflects what has been said in the paper?

   Most college essays should contain a thesis statement that can be proven, is limited to what you can adequately develop in the essay, and is focused. The thesis statement should prepare the readers for the facts and details you will use in the essay to prove your limited, focused point.

   - Do have a thesis statement that is appropriate for the length of the assignment.
   - Do have a thesis statement that is supported by a rational basis.
   - Don’t have a thesis statement that asks a question.
   - Don’t have a thesis statement that is so obvious that few people would take issue with it.
   - Don’t have a thesis statement that is confusing.
   - Don’t have a thesis statement that includes a signpost or announcement.

   One way to craft a thesis statement is to look at the paragraphs of your paper to establish what point you have made in each paragraph. Then use these statements to craft a thesis that reflects your paper. Another way to craft a thesis statement is to decide what points you want to make in the paper and use these points to write the thesis. Then you can use the thesis statement to guide you in drafting the rest of the paper.

3. Is there an inviting introduction?

   The introduction should open with a few sentences that engage the reader's attention. The paragraph should be at least 4 sentences and 50-100 words long and usually concludes with the thesis statement. To engage the reader’s attention you can begin with the following:

   - A startling statistic or fact
   - A vivid example
   - A description
   - A paradoxical statement
   - A quotation or bit of dialogue
   - A question
   - An analogy
   - A joke or anecdote
No matter how you choose to engage the reader’s attention, the introduction should forecast for the reader what you will discuss in the essay, so the material used there needs to be relevant to the topic you are discussing.

4. Is the conclusion satisfying?

A good conclusion will echo your main idea without dully repeating it. In the conclusion you can

- Summarize the main point
- Pose a question for future study
- Offer advice
- Propose a course of action
- Include a detail, example, or image from the introduction to wrap up the idea

A conclusion should not

- Introduce a new idea
- Offer an apology
- Leave the reader hanging

Once you have looked at the larger global issues, move your attention to the paragraphs. Look at each paragraph individually and revise as needed.

5. Does the paragraph do what was promised by the thesis?

If you have established in the thesis statement, for example, that you will deal with three issues, have you covered each issue adequately, each in its own paragraph?

If you have not, reorganize the ideas or draft a new paragraph so that all issues you have announced you will deal with are, in fact, properly dealt with.

Or, go back and revise the thesis so that the paragraphs and thesis match.

6. Do the paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that announces what part of the larger issue will be covered in that paragraph?

If you have developed an idea but not made clear to the reader what idea you are going to develop in the paragraph, go back and craft a sentence that does forecast for the reader what part of the larger issue you will be addressing in this paragraph.

If your paragraph has a topic sentence, does the rest of the paragraph fulfill the promise of that topic sentence? Have you really proved the point you set out to prove or have you wandered off into another idea? Refocus the paragraph so that the topic sentence reflects the content of the paragraph, and vice versa.

7. Have you given adequate examples, illustrations, etc., to support the point this paragraph is trying to make?

- Could someone who had very little information about what you are addressing understand what you are trying to say?
- This is the time to carefully define your words, especially vague pronouns, provide vivid examples, sketch out clear illustrations, etc. so that you leave no doubt in the reader's mind as to your intentions.
- A well developed paragraph is at least 5 sentences and 100-200 words long. If your paragraph does not meet those standards, you have probably not provided enough explanation.

8. Does the paragraph end with a summarizing sentence?

If a paragraph is well developed, you will need to remind your reader of the point you are trying to make. A good summarizing sentence reinforces the point you are making in the paragraph for your reader. Now focus your
attention on the transition sentences, words, or phrases that allow your reader to understand not only what to think about your ideas but how think about your ideas.

9. Have you provided transition sentences, words, or phrases that lead the reader from paragraph to paragraph?

- The transition can be part of the concluding sentence. As you wrap up one idea, forecast where you will go next with your ideas.
- The transition can be part of the topic sentence. Revisit what you have just established before stating the new topic.
- The transitions should indicate the relationship between the ideas being developed in the two paragraphs they join.

10. Within each paragraph are there transition sentences, words or phrases that lead the reader from idea to idea?

- Just as the transitions between paragraphs indicate the relationship between the ideas in the individual paragraphs, transitions within the paragraphs tell the reader the relationship between the sentences in the paragraph.
- Is the new information in your paragraph an example of what you just stated? Use the phrase, “for example,”
- Is the new information contrary to what you have just stated? Use “however,” or “but”.
- Consult your transitions sheet for more transition words and phrases.

11. Finally, after you have the information in the paper well presented, check your paper for sentence level concerns.

- Prepare an individualized proofreading sheet.
- Look at the papers your instructor has returned. What problems has your instructor marked on your paper? Look those up in your handbook or ask your instructor for an explanation.
- Think about the problems you have had in writing before. Look those up in your handbook or ask your instructor for an explanation.
- On your proofreading sheet indicate how you would identify your particular problem and how you would fix that problem.
- Add the correct spelling of any words or homonyms that might cause you trouble.
- Cover your paper with your proofreading sheet and pull the sheet slowly down over your paper so that you reveal your writing one sentence at a time. Check the sentence for possible problems. Fix those problems you find. Then continue on slowly through the paper until you have corrected all errors you see.

12. If there are errors that you know you just won't see--even when you read your paper slowly--ask a trusted friend or a tutor to read your paper, pointing out the errors you have missed. Then fix those errors yourself.
Spelling

Mario Pei in *The Story of English* said “the English spelling system is the world’s most awesome mess.” If you have ever had any difficulty with spelling, you will likely agree with him. But the fact that the system is a mess does not excuse us from learning to spell. In our society our level of intelligence, our academic potential, even our ability to succeed in a job are often judged by our ability or lack of ability to spell. So if we have problems with spelling, it is to our advantage to learn to spell as well as we can.

The history of the English language explains why our spelling system is a “mess.” English has its roots in the Anglo-Saxon language, a Germanic language. Because of invasion, this original language was influenced by the Scandinavian and French languages. As English speakers moved all over the world, they borrowed words from all the language groups they encountered. Our penchant for borrowing and creating new words out of parts of old words has given us a rich language but one in which spelling is not uniform and therefore not easy.

**How We Learn to Spell**

There are two main routes to learning to spell: the **visual** and the **auditory**.

Visual spellers know how to spell because the spelling of the word looks right to them. These people have learned to spell from seeing the words on the printed page while they are reading. If asked to spell an unfamiliar word, they will usually have to write the word out to be sure of the spelling. They often can spell words they cannot pronounce.

Auditory spellers know how to spell because they can relate the sound of the word to the letters that represent that sound. They are often auditory learners who learn best by hearing. These are also people for whom phonics instruction worked. They can often pronounce words that they don’t know the meaning of.

Neither of these methods works 100% of the time, so all spellers, to be good spellers, must use some supplemental routes to become accurate spellers.

Practical Spelling: *The Bad Speller’s Guide to Getting it Right Every time (Basics Made Easy in 20 Minutes a Day)* by Anna Castley provides the speller with both visual and auditory routes to improve spelling.

Spelling Smart: *A Ready-To-Use Activities Program for Students with Spelling Difficulties* by Cynthia M. Stowe also provides the speller with both visual and auditory routes to improve spelling.

**Define Your Spelling Problem**

Visual and auditory spellers both have strengths and weaknesses that they bring to the task of learning to spell well. No one person needs to know everything there is to know about spelling to learn to spell well; instead, each one needs to know what his/her weak areas are. To know what areas you need to work on, take a spelling test:

A Spelling Test
http://www.sentex.net/~mmcadams/spelling.html

Capital Community College Grammar Website
http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/spelling.htm

Based on what you learn from the spelling tests, choose which strategies you need to practice to become a better speller.

Two strategies are:

**Traditional Supplemental Routes to Good Spelling**

Learn the Spelling Rules
If you know the spelling rules, you can apply them or recognized English spelling patterns in order to spell correctly.

Mnemonics (memory devices to help you remember spelling rules) work well for rules. The chant “I before e except after c” is an example of a mnemonic.

Knowing the rules can help in spelling many tricky words. To review spelling rules, see:

*A Writer's Reference* pp. 283 – 86
*A Writer's Reference* Online edition in section S1
*Spelling 101* by Claudia Sorsby lists all the spelling rules
*Practical Spelling* by Anna Castley gives rules
*Painless Spelling* by Mary Elizabeth Podhaizer lists rules

http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/spelling.htm

http://spellingbee.com/cctoc.shtml

**Assistive Technology Routes to Good Spelling**

*Create Your Own “Word Wall”*

In some homes and classrooms where children are learning to read and spell, everything is labeled with its words. In other classrooms, when the students learn new words, the words go on the “word wall” where all students can see the words they need to know daily. You can create your own word wall by correctly spelling words you may need to know on index cards or some similar device. You can also purchase blank study cards on a ring to use for your personalized word wall. When you need to use a word you have difficulty with, it is there correctly spelled in your study card file.

*Use Spell-checkers*

Spell-checkers have been around since the 70’s in the form of small hand-held dictionaries, which are now available very cheaply. Most are very helpful because you do not need to know how to spell the word. You can enter the letters you know in a word, and the machine will provide alternatives until you find the right word.

Most word-processing programs now have automatic spell-checkers as part of the package. Most poor spellers can recognize the proper spelling of the word when the program provides a list of possible words to choose from.

While spell-checkers can discover misspelled words and suggest alternative spellings, most are not “smart” enough to distinguish between legitimate spellings of the words, i.e., homonyms. So if you have one form of, for instance, their/they’re/there, the spell-checker will not flag that word, even if you do not have the one with the right meaning. You will still need to reread your work for homonyms to be sure you have the spelling that means what you want to say.

Spell-checkers work well for people who are visual spellers, that is those who can recognize the right form of the word when they see it, even if they don’t have the correct spelling embedded in their minds.

**Dictionaries**

*On-line dictionaries*

For a listing of online dictionaries see

http://www.libraryspot.com/dictionaries/

Many of these dictionaries give not only the meaning, the correct spelling, and the history of the word, but also pronounce the word for you.
Word Games On-line

One way to improve your spelling is to play games that require you to spell. Playing such games builds up your ability to recognize spelling patterns. Try some of the following to improve your spelling:

Hangman
http://www2.allmixedup.com/cgi-bin/hangman/hangman?start&d

Crossword Puzzles
http://cgi.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/crosswords/daily/front.htm

Wordsearch
http://www.msnbc.com/comics/words_class_files/wordsearch.asp

Wordscram
http://www.billsgames.com/wordscram/

Merriam-Webster Word Game of the Day
http://www.m-w.com/game/

Special Spelling Problems

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound alike or nearly alike but have different meanings and different spellings. Most spell checkers will not flag homonyms for you because each form of the word is an acceptable spelling, so you will have to find other means to find them.

Your hand-held spell checker may offer a choice of the forms of homonyms for you.

Create an individualized proofreading sheet to make corrections. To create this sheet, consult lists of homonyms, such as

http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/notorious.htm, which provides an extensive list of homonyms and easily confused words.

Books Worth Buying to Improve Your Ability to Spell


Specialized Spelling Dictionaries

Subject-Verb Agreement

Verbs should agree with the subject of the sentence in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, or third).

Present Tense forms of Love (a typical verb)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>loves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple Past Tense – expresses action which happened in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/She/it</td>
<td>walked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special Circumstances

Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word or phrase that comes between.

Word groups often come between the subject and the verb. Such word groups, usually modifying the subject, may contain a noun that at first appears to be the subject. By mentally stripping away such modifiers, you can isolate the noun that is in fact the subject.

- The staff in the library are always helpful.
- (Ask yourself what is the real subject? Who is helpful?)

Treat most subjects joined with and as plural.

A subject with two or more parts is nearly always plural.

- Bill and Bob like to hunt together.

Exception: When a compound subject is preceded by each or every, treat the subject as singular.

- Each book, magazine article, and newspaper report needs to be read carefully.

Exception: When the parts of the subject form a single unit or when they refer to the same person or thing, treat the subject as singular.

- Ice cream and cake is a nice dessert.
- Dave’s teacher and advisor is always helpful.

Exception: With subjects connected by or or nor (or by either . . . or or neither . . . nor), make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to verb.

- A book or an article fulfills the assignment.
- A book or two articles fulfill the assignment.

Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular.

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things, words such as anybody, anyone, everybody, everyone, etc.
Everyone likes ice cream.
Everybody who goes to the game enjoys the experience.

Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural.

Collective nouns name a class or a group, for example jury, committee, class, etc.

- The jury reaches a verdict.
- The jury debates among themselves.

Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.

- There are many hills surrounding Spearfish, SD.

*Who, which, and that* take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

The relative pronouns *who, which, and that* have antecedents, that is nouns or pronouns to which they refer. They, therefore, take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

- The man who lives next to me has been sick.  (Who does the *who* refer to?)

Collective nouns, titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases are singular.

Collective nouns are words such as *athletics, economics, mathematics, physics, statistics, measles,* and *news.*

- Economics is required for business majors.
- *A Witness of Combines* is Kent Meyer’s first published book.
- Skiing is a popular winter sport in the Black Hills.
**Thesis Statement**

An effective thesis statement should be a **generalization**, not a fact; it should be **limited**, not too broad; and it should be sharply **focused**, not too vague.

- It prepares the readers for facts and details so should be a generalization.
- It should be limited to what you can adequately develop in the essay.
- It should be focused so not contain hard-to-define words like interesting, good, etc.

- *Do* have a thesis statement that is appropriate for the length of the assignment.
- *Do* have a thesis statement that is supported by a rational basis.

- *Don’t* have a thesis statement that asks a question.
- *Don’t* have a thesis statement that is so obvious that few people would take issue with it.
- *Don’t* have a thesis statement that is confusing.
- *Don’t* have a thesis statement that includes a signpost or announcement.
**Topic Sentences and Paragraph Development**

The *Topic Sentence* directly and specifically states the point that will be made in the paragraph. The topic sentence is usually one part of the larger thesis of the paper. In an academic essay, the topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph.

*Paragraphs* focus on a main point which the writer then sticks to and develops fully. Paragraphs in the academic essay have a regular structure:

- Topic sentence
- Defining sentence
- Examples, illustration, description, etc.
- Concluding sentence

Paragraphs may be developed by:

- Description
- Process
- Comparison and Contrast
- Analogy
- Cause and Effect
- Classification and Division
- Definition

Paragraphs are made coherent by:

- Linking ideas clearly
- Repeating key words
- Using parallel structure
- Maintaining consistency
- Providing transitions

Paragraphs should be at least 5 sentences and 100 to 200 words long, although they can be longer. Shorter paragraphs force the reader to do too much starting and stopping. More importantly, the idea in an academic paragraph is not fully developed with fewer than 100 words. However, very long paragraphs usually make it difficult for the reader to concentrate on the main point. Reasons for beginning a new paragraph:

- To mark off the introduction and the conclusion
- To signal a new idea
- To indicate an important shift in time and place
- To emphasize a point (by placing it at the beginning or the end, not in the middle, of a paragraph)
- To highlight a contrast
- To signal a change of speakers in dialogue
- To provide readers with a needed pause
- To break up a text that looks too dense
Using Effective Transitions

Transition words and phrases signal connections between ideas. They are meant to help the reader mentally relate the preceding thought to the idea now being introduced. Because transitions maintain the flow of thought, they help achieve continuity in written text.

Transitions can be placed:

- **At the beginning of a clause and thus create a compound sentence, as in**

  I really thought I would win the family basketball pool; however, I made some poor choices.

- **At the beginning of a sentence, as in**

  However, it would seem that my son will win all the prizes.

- **At the end of the sentence, as in**

  Chris could keep all the prizes for himself, of course.

- **Within the sentence, as in**

  He told me, however, that he would share his prize with me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition and coordination</td>
<td>Additionally, again, also, and, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, next, similarly, took, what is more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td>Accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, if, for, for this reason, hence, otherwise, since, so, then, therefore, thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>After all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on the whole, to sum up, to summarize, that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizing</td>
<td>As a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, in general, ordinarily, usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement</td>
<td>In essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>But, by the same token, in the same manner, likewise, similarly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Although, at another extreme, but, by contrast, conversely, instead, even though, nonetheless, notwithstanding, on one hand, on the contrary, on the other hand, rather, still, yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concession</td>
<td>Anyway, at any rate, be that as it may, even so, however, in any case, in any event, nevertheless, still, this fact notwithstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td>After, as, at first, at last, at the same time, before, during, eventually, finally, first, for now, for the time being, formerly, immediately, in the first place, in time, in turn, in the mean time, later, last, meanwhile, next, presently, previously, second, simultaneously, since, soon, subsequently, then, to begin with, when, while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>For example, for instance, for one thing, to demonstrate, to illustrate, indeed, in fact, in particular, namely, specifically, that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Ideally, if necessary, if possible, strictly speaking, theoretically, hopefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alteration</td>
<td>Or, either/or, another possibility, as an alternative, neither/nor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show direction or place</td>
<td>Above, below, beyond, farther on, nearby, opposite, close, to the left, to the right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion of fact</td>
<td>As a matter of fact, as it happens, as you know, believe it or not, certainly, clearly, doubtless, in fact, naturally, needless to say, obviously, without doubt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verb Formation

Verbs agree with their subject in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, third).

Present tense forms of love (a typical verb)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>loves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present tense forms of have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>has</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present tense form of do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>do/don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>do/don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>does/doesn’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present tense forms of be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past tense forms of be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Person</td>
<td>You</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Person</td>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exceptions in forming verbs

With subjects connected by or or nor (or by either . . . or or neither . . . nor), make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to verb.

- Mary or John is going to the game.
- Mary or the Smiths are going to the game.

Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular. Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things, words such as anybody, anyone, everybody, everyone, etc.

- Everyone loves our teacher, Dr. Doolittle.
- Everybody who went to his class was happy with his teaching.

Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural. Collective nouns name a class or a group, for example jury, committee, class, etc.

- The class enjoys his ideas.
- The class are discussing their papers.
Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb.

- There are only a few who do not like him.

There is/are and it is/are are vague phrases which are used to hold the subject and verb positions in a sentence. Revising the sentence makes it clear which verb to use. The meaning of the sentence is **Only a few do not like him.** A few is plural so the plural verb is needed. The revised sentence, incidentally, is more direct so would be more appropriate than the other sentence.

Be aware of the standard forms of verbs.

In English verbs have five forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Usually I walk.</th>
<th>I ride all over town.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>Yesterday I walked.</td>
<td>Yesterday I rode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past participle</td>
<td>I have walked many times before.</td>
<td>I have ridden many times before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present participle</td>
<td>I am walking right now.</td>
<td>I am riding right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-s form (denoting singular or plural subjects)</td>
<td>He/she/it usually walks.</td>
<td>He/she/it usually rides.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consult *A Writer's Reference* pp. 175 – 7 for a list of irregular verbs.

Choose the appropriate verb tense to indicate when an action happened.

**Simple Present** – expresses action happening now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I walk</td>
<td>We walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ride</td>
<td>We ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
<td>are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simple past** – expresses action which happened in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I walked</td>
<td>We walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rode</td>
<td>We rode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simple future** – expresses action which will happen in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will walk</td>
<td>We will walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will ride</td>
<td>We will ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will be</td>
<td>will be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Perfect** – expresses action completed at the present time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have walked</td>
<td>We have walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have ridden</td>
<td>We have ridden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have been</td>
<td>have been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Past perfect** – expresses action completed at a specified or implied past time – also called pluperfect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I had walked</td>
<td>We had walked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had ridden</td>
<td>We had ridden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had been</td>
<td>had been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He/she/it  had walked  had ridden  had been  They  had walked  had ridden  had been

Future Perfect – expresses action completed by a specific time in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will have walked</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>will have walked</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>will have walked</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>will have ridden</th>
<th>will have been</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will have ridden</td>
<td>will have been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>will have ridden</td>
<td>will have been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>will have ridden</td>
<td>will have been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Present progressive – describes actions in progress at the present time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am walking</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>are walking</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>is walking</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>am riding</th>
<th>are walking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am riding</td>
<td>are riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>are riding</td>
<td>are being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>is riding</td>
<td>are being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past progressive – describes actions in progress at a specified time in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>was walking</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>were walking</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>was walking</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>was riding</th>
<th>were riding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>was riding</td>
<td>were being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>were riding</td>
<td>were being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>was riding</td>
<td>were being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future progressive – describes actions that will be in progress in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will be walking</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>will be walking</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>will be walking</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>will be riding</th>
<th>will be being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>will be riding</td>
<td>will be being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>will be riding</td>
<td>will be being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/it</td>
<td>will be riding</td>
<td>will be being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mood

English verbs not only express person, number, and time of action, but they also express mood.

**Indicative** is used for declare facts and opinions or to ask questions.

- Snow has fallen in every month of the year in Spearfish, SD.
- We have a good basketball team.
- Will you go the the game with me?

**Imperative** is used to issue orders or give advice.

- Shovel the walk, please.
- Do your homework as soon as it is assigned.

**Subjunctive** is used to express wishes, requests, or conditions contrary to fact.

- If I were you, I would study more
- If I were a member of Congress, I would vote for that bill.
- I wish that Dr. K. were my professor.
Active vs. Passive Verbs

In the active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action.

- The committee reached a decision.

In the passive voice the subject receives the action.

- A decision was reached by the committee.

Both active and passive constructions are grammatically correct, but active verbs are usually more effective because they are simpler and more direct.
Writing an Exam Essay

An effective essay test answer is well-focused, well-organized, well-supported, and well-packaged.

Well-Focused

Be sure to answer the question that is asked completely; that is, answer all parts of the question. Avoid "padding." While adding a lot of interesting but irrelevant information to your answer may show the grader that you know a lot, it also suggests that you don’t know the right answer so are just writing to fill the space. Be sure you understand and answer the question.

Well-Organized

Don't write a haphazard travelogue in a "think-as-you-go" manner. The grader is not going to play detective and unravel clues as to what you might know. Do some planning and be sure that what you write has a clearly marked introduction which both states the point(s) you are going to make and also, if possible, how you are going to proceed. In addition, the essay should have a clearly indicated conclusion which summarizes the material covered and emphasizes your thesis or main points.

Well-Supported

Do not just assert something is true, prove it! What facts, figures, examples, tests, etc. prove your point? You may be intelligent, loveable, etc., but no one is going to believe all your statements just because you say they are true. In many cases, the difference between an A and a B as a grade is due to the effective use of supporting evidence.

Well-Packaged

People who do not use conventions of language are thought of by their readers as less competent and less educated. Reread your essay answer to edit it carefully.

To write an effective exam essay

- Read through all the questions carefully.
- Budget your time and decide which question(s) you will answer first.
- Underline the key word(s) which tell you what to do for each question.
- Choose an organizational pattern appropriate for each key word and plan your answers on scratch paper or in the margins.
- Write your answers as quickly and as legibly as you can; do not take the time to recopy.
- Begin each answer with one or two sentence thesis which summarizes your answer. If possible, phrase the statement so that it rephrases the question's essential terms into a statement (which therefore directly answers the essay question).
- Support your thesis with specific references to the material you have studied.
- Proofread your answer and correct errors in spelling and mechanics.
Writing Complete Sentences

What constitutes a sentence?

Sentences in English have both a subject and a verb.

A subject names who or what the sentence is about. A subject is the actor in the sentence. Subjects can be nouns (persons, places, or things) or noun phrases or gerund phrases.

Nouns are usually signaled by an article (a, an, the). They can be identified by asking who or what is doing an action.

A verb expresses action (jump, think, has been jumping, is thinking) or state of being (is, become). They can be identified by asking what is the action.

What are common problems with sentence boundaries?

Sentence Fragments

How to identify

A sentence fragment is a word group that pretends to be a sentence but lacks either a subject or a verb.

How to revise

- Attach fragmented subordinate clauses or turn them into sentences.
- Attach fragmented phrases or turn them into sentences.
- Attach other fragmented words group or turn them into sentences.
- Attach lists to a complete sentence with a colon or a dash.

Run-on sentences

How to identify

Run-on sentences are independent clauses, word groups that stand alone as a sentence, that have not been joined correctly.

How to revise

- Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction – and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet .
- Use a semicolon if the two sentences are of about the same length, and the second sentence tells more about the first sentence, or if there is no word that shows the relationship between the two ideas.
- Make the clauses into two separate sentences.
- Revise the sentence.
- Join the two sentences with a subordinating conjunction.

Comma splices

How to identify

A comma splice is two or more independent clauses joined by a comma without a coordinating conjunction.

How to revise

- Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction – and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet.
- Use a *semicolon* if the two sentences are of about the same length, and the second sentence tells more about the first sentence, or if there is no word that shows the relationship between the two ideas.
- Make the *clauses* into two separate sentences.
- Revise the sentence.
- Join the two sentences with a *subordinating conjunction*.

(For more information, see *A Writer’s Reference* p. 204 - 214 or the on-line handbook.)