WRITING PAPERS

A Handbook for
Students at Smith College
4th Revised Edition

A publication of the Jacobson Center for
Writing, Teaching and Learning

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In memory of Ron
Macdonald – teacher,
scholar, author, friend.

WRITING PAPERS

PREFACE

"Do you still have it? That little book about writing I had as a student? It taught me how to write." That's what they ask after they introduce themselves.

They are the alumnae who call asking for copies of *Writing Papers*, which they remember from their undergraduate days. Sometimes the call comes from an alumna who now has a job in which she needs to do more writing than she's done in the past. *Writing Papers* will help her make that transition. Sometimes it's an alumna who has finished her graduate work and is about to start her first job as a faculty member. *Writing Papers* will help her become a better teacher. Sometimes it's an alumna who thinks her teenager needs to improve his or her writing and wants to suggest *Writing Papers*.

No matter the reason for the call, all the callers are relieved that I know the book they're talking about, so pleased that the book is still available and that Smith students are still using it, so happy that I can send them a copy, and (I love this part) for free! Almost three decades old, *Writing Papers* connects generations of Smith students and alumnae.

The original *Writing Papers* was the creation of an inspired group of English faculty who saw a need for a student guide to writing papers at Smith. They drew on their knowledge about writing and their experiences as teachers, writers, and former students. They wrote the book in longhand and typed drafts on typewriters.

Times have changed. Typewriters have given way to desktop computers, just as desktop computers have given way to laptops. The goals and importance of good writing haven't changed, however. Students today, like the students of twenty-five years ago, need to be able to reason clearly and articulately and to express themselves in clear, concise, correct, even elegant prose.

The various reports of The National Commission on Writing for America's Families, Schools, and Colleges—a national organization of college and university professors and administrators, business leaders, school teachers and administrators, and authors—compellingly make this point. In 2003, the commission released *The Neglected R: The Need for a Writing Revolution*, which declared that "writing today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many." The following year it released *Writing: A Ticket to Work ... Or a Ticket Out*, a survey of business leaders. For this report the commission surveyed 120 major

American corporations employing millions of people and concluded that "in today's workplace writing is a 'threshold skill' for hiring and promotion among salaried (i.e. professional) employees." Finally in 2006, the commission released *Writing and School Reform*, which had "A Writing Agenda for the Nation" as its first recommendation: "We recommend that the nation's leaders place writing squarely in the center of the school agenda and that policymakers at the state and local levels provide the resources required to improve writing." At Smith we rose to this challenge long ago.

Since the original publication of *Writing Papers*, the teaching of writing at Smith has evolved considerably. It's ceased to be the exclusive responsibility of the English Department. Writing is now taught by faculty members in all the disciplines, an inconceivable idea for many thirty years ago. During these years the college has also seen the growth of the Jacobson Center into a professionally-staffed academic support center that plays a central role in the teaching of writing, and it's seen the increasing importance of information literacy and the teaming of writing instructors and librarians in supporting students' efforts to write well. Starting with the 3rd edition, *Writing Papers* has been extensively revised by writing instructors and librarians.

The wisdom of the various generations of contributors to *Writing Papers* remains, however. In this 4th edition, you'll find intact passages from all three previous editions. All of us who've contributed to the book remain grateful to the writers of the first edition, as do generations of Smith students.

We're also grateful to Joan Leiman Jacobson, class of 1947, whose generous gift makes possible this and many other efforts to help Smith students become more effective, articulate, graceful writers.

Julio Alves
Director, Jacobson Center for Writing, Teaching and Learning
Spring, 2009

GETTING STARTED

PRE-WRITING

You may think of writing a paper as simply the act of sitting down in front of a computer and bashing it out, first word to last word. It's probably more productive to think of writing a paper as including all the work you do before that first word hits the page. These activities are sometimes called pre-writing, and they can include reading, questioning, note-taking, list-making, free writing, outlining, and drafting. Rather than complicating the process, these techniques can make writing smoother, easier, and ultimately more effective. (Some research indicates that experienced writers spend more of their time on pre-writing and revising than on drafting.)

Read Your Assignment Carefully

If there's a specific assigned topic, what is it asking you to do? Summarize? Analyze? Compare and contrast? Define? Explicate? Having a good grasp of your teacher's expectations will help you decide on the approach you need to take. Suppose you're asked to analyze the role of Christianity in the fall of the Roman Empire. Such an assignment doesn't require you to discuss the differences between the Christian faith and paganism. Rather, it calls on you to build an argument explaining how and why Christianity affected – or did not affect – the decline of the Roman Empire.

Ask Questions, Especially When Your Assignment is Open-Ended

Good papers usually begin with good questions. As you're doing the reading and research for a paper, write down your versions of these questions:

- What has particularly interested me about this subject?
- What passages in the text have I underlined in my first reading, and is there anything that connects them? (Where you see a pattern of related ideas widely separated in the text, there's often a paper topic.)
- What has my teacher, someone else in the class, the textbook, or a secondary source said about this topic that I disagree with, or at least find questionable? (Where there's disagreement, there's often a paper topic.)

As you answer these questions, try to make your subsequent questions more and more specific and focused. Stop taking notes once in a while and ask: How have my questions changed? What will probably be my main question? How will the reading I'm doing now help me answer that question?

Try Free Writing

Some writers find the technique of free writing a useful way to get started. Peter Elbow in his *Writing Without Teachers* has some interesting ideas about free writing as a way to find out what you really have to say. In his free writing exercises, you write for ten minutes without stopping, without lifting your pen from the paper (or your fingers from the keyboard), without stopping to agonize over word choice or spelling or coherence, just letting the ideas flow out. Then you stop and sift the good from the bad, the useful from the useless. Next you repeat the free writing, basing it on what you've salvaged from the first attempt. You repeat the process until you have something you can use to begin your paper. For some people, this process may take as many as five increasingly coherent versions; for some people it may never work at all. But it's worth trying when you're having difficulty getting started.

Consider Lists and Outlines

Consider making a list – of ideas that interest you, of passages in the text that catch your eye. In the opening stages, a list seems less daunting than an outline, yet often, even when you begin your list with no central idea or direction, you'll find that one begins gradually to take shape. The passages that strike you all deal with a particular character or theme or image; the ideas that interest you begin to organize themselves into two or three related categories. An outline might be your next step, although some writers seem allergic to outlines and may benefit more by beginning to draft the paper at this stage.

If you have some conception of your general idea and of the evidence you can give for it, an outline is a classic device for getting started. It can give you a framework for your first gropings and can help you organize the material your paper will be based on.

We wrote this handbook, for example, from a rather simple topic or phrase outline, an early version of the Table of Contents on page ii-iv. A more elaborate outline would have more sub-headings:

II. Writing a Draft
   A.   The First Draft
         1. Assessing Your Audience
            a.Who is reading the paper?
            b.What should be included/avoided?
         2. Refining Your Topic

Notice that in the excerpt from the detailed outline above, you show the relative significance of items by their number or letter and by indentation—the more important or general closest to the left-hand margin, the less important or more specific farthest from it.

Sometimes a sentence outline is more helpful. When we discussed this project, we didn't just list the topics we were covering. We explained them in detail. For example, "In the first section, we'll discuss how to start writing and offer different techniques that will enable writers to generate ideas for papers. In the second section, we'll discuss the first draft, developing an argument, introductions and conclusions." For a short paper you might want to write a sentence about what each paragraph will do; for a longer paper you would probably write one sentence for each section.

In an assertion outline you write a sentence summarizing the point of each paragraph or section. This forces you to think carefully about the course your argument is going to take, and to develop each paragraph or section logically in relation to the others. We could have described what we were doing by saying, "The first section, Pre-Writing, explains that although beginning a paper can be challenging, there are techniques and practices that can make it easier. The second section, Writing a Draft, discusses how to shape your topic and thesis."

Sometimes a question outline, a tentative design for your paper based on the questions you're trying to answer, will be more useful: What techniques enable writers to begin their writing assignments? How does a thesis differ from a topic?

An outline, like a first draft, can always be changed and usually should be. Though we knew approximately what subjects we wanted to cover in this handbook, for example, their order changed somewhat as we worked. But an outline is always a useful point of reference, even as it changes.

Write Multiple Drafts

Even if you believe that you can write a good paper in one intense, creative session, you may find it hard to get started or to produce your best writing.   Good writers rarely produce perfect copy the first time, and many change their works even after they have been published. (Even great writers cross out, add, and change; take a look at some of their manuscripts.)

You'll find it easier to begin to write things down if you remind yourself that this is a draft, that your first attempt can be changed, reorganized, or even thrown away. Many writers find that writing multiple drafts actually shortens their overall writing time, particularly now that word processors are so widely used. When you accept that your first efforts are preliminary, you're more likely to avoid editing too early in the writing process. You gain the freedom to follow thoughts and ideas to more original ends.

Start This Process Early

As soon as you get your assignment, begin to work on it. When you allow yourself time for reflecting, asking questions, outlining, drafting, revising and editing, you can break the writing process into manageable stages, avoid last minute panics, and have more control over your work. Because computer word-processing programs are especially useful in the drafting stage, unwary writers may get sucked into that stage too soon and for too long. Careful thought and planning (pre-writing) lead to better writing, as does substantial effort in the revising stage, especially in revising for meaning.

WRITING A DRAFT

As you prepare to write the first draft of your paper, you should already know what your teacher is asking you to do and what general topic you're exploring. You also need to assess your audience and refine your topic by understanding the length and scope of your paper. Then the task is to create a workable thesis statement and begin building an argument that supports it.

Assessing Your Audience

In general, you can assume that your audience for any given paper is your teacher and your classmates. In other words, you're writing for people who know the material that you're discussing, and you should avoid providing unnecessary or irrelevant information on your topic. If you're

writing a paper on Jane Austen's *Emma* for a literature class, you don't need to spend time providing a plot summary or a biographical sketch of Austen herself. Your teacher and your classmates have already read the novel and know something about Austen. Your paper should only assert a claim or an insight about the novel that you develop through your analysis of the text.

Occasionally your teacher may ask you to write to a specific imagined audience. You may be required to write a grant proposal, a newspaper editorial, or a legal brief. You still need to assess the purpose of your writing and the audience to whom you're directing it, because you need to make sure your writing doesn't include information your readers already know or exclude information they may need.

Refining Your Topic

You can begin to refine your topic by looking at the length requirement of your assignment. A two-page paper requires you to make different writing choices than a ten-page paper would. The shorter the paper, the tighter the focus and the narrower your argument must be. By contrast, a longer paper will allow you to explore an idea or issue in greater depth. If your topic is ways to improve the Social Security system but your limit is two pages, it would be impossible for you to analyze and assess all the conflicting proposals for overhauling the system. However, you could look at one aspect of one proposal in a short paper:

> Allowing individuals to invest their own Social Security
> dollars in the stock market.

Creating a Thesis

Simply refining your topic is not enough. You must make it clear to your reader that you have something to say about that topic, a point or thesis. In the simplest terms, a thesis statement is a conviction that you've reached about your topic:

> Individuals should be allowed to invest their own Social
> Security dollars in the stock market.

To write an effective essay, you must prove your thesis. You must analyze your subject critically, not just describe it. Don't write about individual investment of Social Security dollars without also

discussing *why* it would (or would not) be a gain for both individuals and the system itself. You must also analyze *how* it would change the existing system. Papers shouldn't be written only to show that you've read something. They must show the result of your thinking and questions about what you've read.

When you create a thesis, you should make sure that it is somewhat contentious: avoid self-evident statements. The following statement is undeniably true, but a poor thesis for a paper:

> Pol Pot was one of the most monstrous leaders of the Twentieth Century.

Such a statement gives you nothing to argue, no facts to analyze; no one would offer a counter-argument. To make sure you have a thesis, rather than just a topic, think of your paper as an experiment in which you see if your analysis supports a hypothesis that you've stated at the beginning:

> American intervention in Cambodian politics during the Vietnam War played a significant role in bringing Pol Pot's Communist Khmer Rouge to power.

To prove this hypothesis, you could analyze and discuss the existing historical facts. There are certainly counter-arguments to this position that you'd have to address and refute in order to prove the truth of this claim.

Another way to make sure you have a thesis is to force yourself to write a sentence about your paper that follows this form: *Although* such and such, *nevertheless* so and so is true, *because*: reason one, reason two, reason three.

> *Although* economists have argued that the stock market is too unstable for safe Social Security fund investment, *nevertheless* an examination of the market's yield over the last fifty years demonstrates the viability of this plan, *because*…

> *Although* the U.S. government sought to stop Communist advances in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War**,** *nevertheless* American policies in Cambodia during the conflict led directly to Pol Pot's Communist Khmer Rouge taking power, *because*…

This formula will lead to a clumsy sentence that you shouldn't use in your papers. But it will give you a provisional outline: the *although* section first, followed by the *nevertheless* section (these two can also be reversed), then the development of each *because* statement. It will also guarantee that you have something to say, that you've considered some arguments against your position, that you have some reasons for taking it. Later, as you edit and revise your paper, you'll probably find it necessary to make this outline more varied or more subtle – or perhaps to abandon it altogether. The thinking involved in constructing that clumsy sentence, however, is never wasted. You've defined your thesis.

Structuring an Argument

A good paper moves steadily toward a goal. Every paragraph and every idea in it should be clearly related to that goal. Cut out peripheral facts and ideas, no matter how fascinating. Cut out plot summaries, descriptions, or discussions of previous research that don't contribute to your argument.

Remind yourself of what you're trying to do. In each paper you'll choose an approach to your topic. You may define, analyze, explain, compare, evaluate or use some mixture of these and other techniques.

Reconsider your approach when you've written your first draft: Ask yourself what method or methods you've used and what methods you could have used instead. How does this analysis support your point? Is your comparison relevant? What would change in the paper if you used another strategy, and would that change be an improvement?

Developing an Argument

A logical argument depends on sound evidence and good reasoning. You must be sure that you've examined your underlying assumptions and made them clear to the reader. Precise thinking in any discipline demands that your basic assumptions be as explicit as possible and that you don't contradict these assumptions anywhere in your paper. You must also be sure that your ideas follow each other logically, that you've given sufficient evidence or proof for your arguments, and that you've acknowledged important conflicting opinions or contradictory facts and dealt with them. Suppose you want to make the following argument:

The current emphasis on lowering cholesterol to prevent heart

disease is misplaced. Recent research shows that specific
vitamin deficiencies are far more accurate as predictors of
heart disease than is high cholesterol.

An effective argument would involve your presentation of the case
for lowering cholesterol and then your refutation of that case based on
your presentation and analysis of the new research documenting the
connection between vitamin deficiencies and heart attacks. The evidence
for this paper, of course, couldn't be your own opinion: the evidence
would have to be reputable, tested science.

When you argue for your points of view about literary or
religious works, a piece of music, or other subjects in the humanities,
you may at times gather scholarly evidence in support of your opinion.
However, the majority of your paper should be based on your own
analysis of textual evidence.

Suppose you want to assert that the imagery in Toni Morrison's
The Bluest Eye intensifies a reader's understanding of the insidious
effects of racism. To prove this thesis, you'll need to examine specific
images and argue why and how Morrison's use of imagery helps readers
understand the way racism affects someone:

By analyzing several images of eyes and seeing in *The Bluest
Eye*, the reader comes to understand how Pecola's obsession
with blue eyes reveals her own internalized racism.

As you write your paper, ask yourself what makes you find
your thesis convincing. Then ask if you've given the reader a chance
to check its validity. Your reader must be able to follow the logical
steps you've made and to examine the evidence you've relied on. Test
your generalizations by thinking of exceptions and counter-arguments.
Be sure that you're being logical when you claim to be logical: don't
sprinkle *hence*, *therefore,* and *thus* where no logical relationship exists.

When you've finished a first draft, try to wait at least a day
before looking at it again. (This is why you should always begin your
writing assignments early!) Then, re-read it as objectively and critically
as possible. Would you, as a detached or even hostile reader, understand
the connections between your thesis, supporting evidence, and
conclusions? Would you understand the important terms, or should they
be defined? Would you find the treatment fair, or have objections and
troubling evidence been swept under the rug? Be the first and fiercest

critic of your own logic.

Remember: The first draft of your paper should contain a thesis statement that you develop by means of a sound argument. Although arguments often appeal to a reader's emotions or ethics, academic arguments should be logical, well-reasoned and well-supported to be sound and therefore persuasive to the reader.

Introductions and Conclusions

Beginning and ending a paper can be a challenge. Often a student writes an introduction and conclusion that are nearly identical, the last paragraph a restatement of the first.

Composing mirror-image first and last paragraphs not only wastes space, it squanders an opportunity. Introductions and conclusions are not just paragraphs that occur at the beginning and end of a paper. They form a dynamic partnership that encloses and enhances an argument. By moving between them, revising each in light of the other, you can clarify your point and clinch your argument.

What should a first paragraph do? Certainly by the end of the first paragraph – or the first sentences in a very short paper, the first paragraphs in a longer one – your reader should have some idea of what your thesis is. The first paragraph is an opportunity to set the appropriate tone for your paper, to catch your reader's attention, to make your reader start thinking with you.

Avoid common pitfalls. If you want to make a good first impression, avoid paragraphs that move grandly from the beginning of recorded history to your specific problem.

> All artists everywhere, in every time and culture, have been
> obsessed with the problem of self.

A beginning as grandiose or pretentious as this one will only make your reader lose faith in you. Another common pitfall is sprinkling background information that any reader of your paper would be likely to know:

> In his fourth-century BC dialogue known as the *Symposium*,
> the Greek philosopher Plato, a student of Socrates, examines
> Socrates' theory of love.

Too many first paragraphs just mark time. The following sentence illustrates the problem:

> While it seems clear that these two books are dissimilar in
> many ways, they show many similarities, and it seems equally
> clear that Fielding has used *Don Quixote* as a model for his
> work.

This sentence finally gets around to saying something in the last
ten words; everything before them is so cautious as to be almost
meaningless. Notice that the first twenty or so words could introduce any
comparison of any two books. Avoid such interchangeable parts. Again,
be specific about your subject right away.

Begin at the beginning, then move on: As you write your paper,
you'll hit your stride, find a more appropriate tone or vocabulary,
discover a particularly good example. You can then go back to recast
your first paragraph, using your discoveries to introduce your reader to
your subject in the cleanest and most effective way.

Let's move between an introduction and conclusion of our own.
Here's a rough introduction:

> America is stronger today because of the contributions of other
> cultures, like Columbus, the Italian, who claimed the New
> World for Spain. So we should be thankful, not angry with
> immigrants who pursue the American dream. My Aunt Gina,
> poor and hungry, came from Sicily in 1945. Mussolini had
> been deposed. World War II was over. To New York she came
> and went to work for a small importer of Sicilian olive oil.
> The company is worth millions today, and her contributions
> can't be discounted, nor can the contributions of all the others
> before her or after her. That's why it's wrong to put limits on
> immigration, though illegal immigration is another matter.

This introduction raises too many questions. Is this a paper about Aunt
Gina or immigration? How relevant is Columbus? Do we need to hear
so much about World War II? Generalizations such as "the American
dream" only add to the fuzzy effect. Illegal immigration may be
pertinent, but is it central?

You may wish to stop everything and revise such an introduction,
and you're not wrong to feel that way – but don't do it yet. Go back later
when the meaning of the paper has emerged, when it's easier to know
how to revise. In other words, write all the way through to the conclusion
just to see how your thinking comes out.

Strange as it may sound, a conclusion is the best friend an introduction has. In writing a conclusion, the writer often draws together ideas and draws out the most significant implications. Let's see what an early conclusion to the paper about Aunt Gina (or is it about immigration?) looks like:

> Like many immigrants, both legal and illegal, Aunt Gina worked for years at rock bottom wages. Without low-wage workers the U.S. economy would undergo a wrenching transformation; many Americans, not just immigrants, would suffer the consequences. In spite of her value to the economy, Gina and others like her have been the targets of campaigns of hate. Anti-immigration hysteria that scapegoats newcomers doesn't make America stronger. It makes America weaker.

Here the writer identifies her subject, the bashing of immigrants and punitive anti-immigration legislation. She's also made clear what's at stake – the health of the American economy, no less. Now it's time to revise the introduction so that it works more closely with the conclusion, so that they fit.

If in an early draft you address your main idea for the first time in the conclusion, or address it with greater effectiveness, why fight it? Such a conclusion might make a fine introduction, so move it to the beginning and revise it, and no one will know the difference! But that requires writing a new conclusion, of course, preferably one that really concludes. Too often, even in revised papers, the last paragraph is a restatement of the first. This creates the impression that in spite of all the ground a paper has covered the argument has arrived nowhere.

Why not tailor the introduction to fit the conclusion? If the conclusion delivers an answer, ask an appropriate question (for example, "Does immigration harm the U.S. economy or help it?"), and place the question in the introduction. You can also restate the question as an issue the paper will resolve. Even if a conclusion raises new, but related issues, or examines the significance of what has been learned, these elements can help a writer craft an opening that anticipates the main point without giving the game away.

Here's the revised introduction:

> When I think of the immigrant experience, I think of Aunt Gina. After World War II, she left Sicily for New York and

went to work for a small importer of olive oil. The company is worth millions today, and her contributions to its success, while modest, can't be discounted. The truth is that Aunt Gina worked all her life for low pay. Now, in the wake of political campaigns against "illegal immigrants," and the enactment of laws that punish legal and illegal immigrants alike, the real contributions of low-wage workers to American prosperity are being cynically overlooked.

Happily, Columbus is gone. So is the extraneous stuff about World War II. Illegal and legal immigrants fall under one category now – low wage workers whose contributions to American prosperity (not the "American dream") are too often overlooked.

Once you're happy with the introduction, it's time to polish the conclusion, starting with the first line. Avoid the formulaic: "In conclusion," "To sum up," "In summary," or "Thus we see that…." The alert reader will know that the conclusion has arrived by the fact that there are no more pages left. Concentrate instead on a transition that engages the main idea, improves the fit. Your last paragraph is your last chance to frame your essential ideas in a succinct and convincing way, to pull together the strands of your argument, to draw conclusions, to suggest their implications. Be sure that your last sentence is both forceful and interesting; end with a bang, not a whimper. Conclusions should both pull together what has gone before and round off your paper.

Sometimes writers like to close with a quotation, and it's fine if you do that, but be sure it amplifies the main point or puts your ideas in perspective. Too often, a closing quotation has a "So what?" effect, especially if it restates points already established. Indeed, "So what?" is a useful question to ask when ending a paper. Where has the argument of the paper taken us? Redefining the key terms of an argument can accomplish the same effect, especially when the redefinition answers the question "So what?" and reveals the significance of your thesis.

Remember that the introduction and conclusion of a paper are your first and last chance to persuade the reader. Be sure to make the most of the opportunities they present.

Paragraphs and Transitions

Although introductions and conclusions are perhaps the most eye-catching parts of a paper, the intervening paragraphs are important too.

A paragraph is a unit of thought. Unit by unit, your paragraphs together develop your paper's thesis. In other words, the central ideas of each of your paragraphs, in sequence, represent an outline of your argument.

Good paragraphs are unified and coherent. You'll find that unified paragraphs often develop a topic sentence that announces the paragraph's theme or controlling idea. Here's an example:

> Freudians are self-contradictory and dogmatic. They contradict themselves whenever they speak of analysis as "The Cure" and at the same time encourage patients to think of analysis as an open-ended process, often lasting for decades. They're maddeningly dogmatic when they meet every criticism with a reference to one of their sacred texts, as if the great Sigmund had an answer for every problem in the modern world.

In this example the topic sentence is the first sentence in the paragraph. Most of the time it's reassuring to your reader to find it there. (It's also helpful to you as a writer; a strong topic sentence means you know from the beginning what you want your paragraph to be about.) Occasionally you may want to locate your topic sentence in the middle of the paragraph, or perhaps to build up to it at the end. Sometimes a paragraph doesn't have an explicit topic sentence, but if not, the paragraph should be so unified that a reader would have no difficulty summarizing its central point.

Irrelevant details or a shift in focus can disrupt paragraph unity. Let's look at our example again, after a less disciplined writer has had a crack at it:

> Freudians are self-contradictory and dogmatic. They contradict themselves whenever they speak of analysis as "The Cure" and at the same time encourage patients to think of analysis as an open-ended process, often lasting for decades.   Analysis can be expensive, too; many Freudian practitioners charge as much as $250 for 50 minutes, and since this can go on for years, a patient may be left with staggering debt. They're maddeningly dogmatic when they meet every criticism with a reference to their sacred texts, as if the great Sigmund had an answer for every problem in the modern world.

The sentence this writer has added is distracting; how much analysis costs isn't really the point. And the sentence not only disrupts the

paragraph's unity, it shifts its focus from Freudians and their theory to the perspective of the suffering, impoverished patient.

Paragraphs should be coherently organized as well as unified. In our first example the writer's organizational plan is clear: she takes the first term in her topic sentence, *self-contradictory*, and explains it; then she does the same for the second term, *dogmatic*. Many other kinds of organization are possible: for example, you can describe something from the outside to the inside; you can go from the general to the specific or vice versa; you can proceed chronologically. Just be sure that the reader can tell what your plan is. Be sure you have a plan.

If each of your paragraphs is unified and organized, you next need to look at them together to be sure they're in the right order. If they aren't, rearrange them so the sequence makes logical sense. When it does, you usually don't have to worry much about transitions, because the logic of each paragraph will carry you naturally into the next. Writers who struggle with transitions are often trying to conceal an underlying organizational problem: not all the so-called "transitional expressions" in the world (*similarly, furthermore, indeed*, and the like) will help if your basic problem is the order of the paragraphs.

But if the logic is there, transitions are easy. Suppose the next paragraph in our essay on Freudian theory goes like this:

> Analysis was suited to a more leisurely past, a more verbal culture, an age when the elite felt entitled to every self-indulgent therapy that presented itself. Modern Freudians need to remind themselves that every great religion has adapted itself and its sacred texts to the demands of new times, new scientific discoveries, new modes of thought.

Let's put it together with the first paragraph and see how the transition practically writes itself:

> Freudian theory is often both self-contradictory and dogmatic. Freudians contradict themselves whenever they speak of analysis as "The Cure" and at the same time encourage patients to think of analysis as an open-ended process, often lasting for decades. They're maddeningly dogmatic when they meet every criticism with a reference to one of their sacred texts, as if the great Sigmund had an answer for every problem in the modern world.

> But Sigmund didn't, and neither do modern Freudians. Analysis was suited to a more leisurely past, a more verbal culture, an age when the elite felt entitled to every self-indulgent therapy that presented itself. Modern Freudians need to remind themselves that every great religion has adapted itself and its sacred texts to the demands of new times, new scientific discoveries, new modes of thought.

Transitional expressions such as *likewise, similarly, in addition, consequently, accordingly, admittedly, although, indeed, chiefly* (and many others) can be very useful, especially if the relation between sentences or paragraphs may not be immediately clear to the reader, or if you want to emphasize certain aspects of these relationships. But there's no substitute for a coherent organization of each paragraph by itself and of the sequence in which you place these well-crafted paragraphs.

REVISING AND EDITING

HIGHER AND LOWER ORDER CONCERNS

When you have a complete first draft of your paper, you'll begin to think about a second draft, a third draft – about revising, in short. Writers who use computers may tend to focus on surface issues, the editing part of revising, when they revise, probably because word processing programs provide nifty tools to help them do this. Experienced writers are more likely to separate the revising/editing process into higher and lower order concerns. Higher order concerns are thesis and focus, audience and purpose, development and organization. These come first. Lower order concerns are editing and proofreading. Deal with these later.

Work on higher order concerns in stages: focus on the main idea first; identify your audience; check your argument.

■ Thesis: Be sure that your paper contains a sentence stating its main point. Try looking for the sentence in your introduction and conclusion. There should be a main idea in there somewhere, preferably one that answers the question "How?" or "Why?"   If not, stop revising and start thinking again.

■ Audience: Knowing your audience helps determine whether you need to define terms or provide background, or how much

analysis is required to explain your thinking. Unless the assignment identifies a specific reader, think of your teacher and classmates as your ideal audience; they've read the texts, but do they see what you see? Explain yourself to them.

■   Development and organization: Does your argument need work? If paragraphs are undeveloped, you may need more evidence or analysis or both. Does your paper progress in a logical way? Don't hesitate to cut and paste paragraphs; you can always move them back. Try to strengthen the connections between points, which means improving your transitions.

Once you've put the building blocks of your paper in place and once you're sure they hold together, then it's time to move on to lower order concerns. Each of these concerns is treated in more detail later in this handbook.

■   Sentences: Grammar check programs can only recognize certain kinds of wordiness and (sometimes) the passive voice. They can't tell you much about sentence structure. Read aloud and listen for meaning, shape, and length. Two sentences that say the same thing can create blocks of verbal concrete. Keep chipping away at that concrete, cutting away everything you don't need. If you run out of breath while reading, you might want to consider breaking up the sentence. Or you may hear too many sentences that are all the same length or constructed the same way. Edit for variety. Reading aloud can help you catch run-ons and sentence fragments. It's important to repair these. They're more than cosmetic errors; they impede understanding.

■   Word Choice: Beware of fancy, pompous words. Do you really want to use "plethora" when "too many" will do? Simple, concrete words can achieve great power when placed in a strong, lean sentence. Use words that tell us what you really mean, not words that obscure meaning. If you hear a phrase all the time ("the bottom line"), or see it in newspapers and magazines or on the Web, it's probably a cliché. Come up with something more original. Consider it a challenge!

■   Punctuation: Why agonize over a comma if you're not satisfied with the sentence in the first place? Many revisions require re-punctuation, so don't start re-punctuating until you've finished revising.

■   Spelling, typos, etc.: Now that you've worked down the list of concerns from the highest to the lowest order, you're ready to proofread. Spell check programs will catch some mistakes but not all; it's a good idea to consult that old standby, the dictionary, too.

In practical terms, it's true, you might find yourself contending with more than one concern at a time. For example, following a logical order of ideas can help refine a thesis; the right word can unlock the right order of words. But if you're stuck, take a step back, work on one concern at a time, and separate your higher order concerns from your lower order concerns.

EDITING FOR STYLE

As you work toward a final version of your draft, at some point your attention will turn to stylistic issues. Words and sentences, after all, are the building blocks you're working with; each one needs to be thoughtfully chosen and carefully placed if the building you're constructing is to be sound. Let's start with choosing the right words.

Choosing the Right Words

Mark Twain once said that the difference between the right word and the wrong one is like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. But how do you find the right one, tell the flash from the flicker?

Your first guide, of course, is a good dictionary. Keep a dictionary handy whenever you're writing, and use it. Use your dictionary to check your word choice, to see if a near-synonym might be closer to what you mean, to see if the word has a metaphorical basis or connotations that undercut your idea, to supplement your computer's spell checker, or to confirm the preposition used with a word.

Though your skill in choosing words and looking at your own language will develop only as you read and practice, here are a few general guidelines for word choice in your papers.

Choose Simple, not Fancy Words

Some students believe that papers should be written in a special language, a language much more abstract, elaborate, and remote than the language they would use in a conversation or a letter. For example, in a paper about Trollope's *Phineas Finn* you might be tempted to write "The protagonist has a disinclination towards matrimony in view of the relative poverty of his prospective betrothed." Don't. Instead, try "The hero doesn't want to marry his fiancée because she's poor." Much better. Though slang is seldom appropriate and though you'll sometimes need to use the special vocabulary of a discipline, you should stay as close as

possible to the words you use every day. Here are some good choices:

> *do* instead of *accomplish*
> *show* instead of *demonstrate, exemplify*, or *exhibit*
> *help* instead of *facilitate*
> *say* instead of *assert, articulate, state,* or *postulate*
> *has* instead of *possess*

Sometimes one simple word can take the place of three or four*:*

> be in attendance at = attend
> due to the fact that = because
> come together as a group = meet
> recognize the fact that = acknowledge
> by means of = with

Often, almost reflexively, we use two words when one will do (and two are redundant), as in:

> final outcome   perfectly clear
> basic essentials   advance planning
> completely accurate   postpone until later

Troublesome Words

The following deceptively similar words cause problems for many writers. The next time you use one of these, look it up:

> affect, effect
> allude, elude
> allusion, illusion
> ambiguous, ambivalent
> assure, ensure, insure
> bourgeois, bourgeoisie
> compliment, complement
> discrete, discreet
> imminent, immanent, eminent

As you encounter other pairs or groups of words that regularly trip you up, start your own list and post it above your desk.

Certain Greek and Latin words commonly used in English that end in *a* are plural: *data, media, phenomena, criteria, colloquia,* etc. They take plural verbs:

This datum is confusing; the further data are even worse.

The medium is the message; the media give conflicting messages.

The only criterion is excellence; the criteria are excellence and enthusiasm.

Don't invent nouns by adding endings to established words. For example:

satirization for *satire*
analyzation for *analysis*
structuralization for *structure*
aggressivity for *aggression*
summarization for *summary*

Clichés, Mixed Metaphors, and Jargon

In typesetting, a cliché was a mold used to cast metal into letters, a shape repeated over and over again. The word cliché now refers to combinations of words that have been repeated so often that they've lost their force. Don't use combinations you've repeatedly heard before. Though *leave no stone unturned* was probably once a vivid way to describe laborious and thorough effort, it now seems limp and unimaginative. Beware of combinations you can complete without thinking: *loud and clear, hue and cry, cool as a cucumber, playing with fire*, etc. And putting a cliché in apologetic quotation marks doesn't redeem it; don't even try.

Be careful not to mix metaphors. A metaphor like "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones" works because it's internally consistent (although repeated usage has made it a cliché). The idea of breaking glass with rocks says something vivid we can understand about self-awareness and vulnerability. "People who live in glass houses shouldn't sling mud at others" doesn't work because the images are inconsistent. Often people mix metaphors because they aren't conscious

of the metaphorical bases of words they use. For example: "This illustrates the void in his life" (can you really illustrate a void?), or "The core of the issue revolves around the larger quandary" (does the core revolve around the apple?).

Jargon is a special problem. All disciplines have their own technical language, words that convey complicated ideas in condensed and precise form: *rubato* in music, *phylum* in biology, *painterly* in art history, *signifier* in literary studies. When you write in these disciplines, words like these, both precise and concise, will serve you well. But these special languages can easily drift over into jargon, resulting in a self-referential prose that only a few initiates can understand: *The integrated interaction of the social unit is ascribed to multi-variables that validate normative cultural standards*.

The First Person and Contractions

This is probably as good a place as any to point out two other choices you have as you select your words. One is whether or not to use the first-person voice in your papers, to say, for example, "I will first examine Coleridge's language. . . ." In many high schools this first-person voice is a no-no. In college (and in life) it's OK, although it will make your tone slightly less formal. *I* is now acceptable in any scholarly writing, even the most technical, as long as your emphasis is on the text, the facts, or the experiment, rather than on your reactions and feelings.

Another choice that has to do with formality is the question of contractions. You may have noticed that in this handbook we've used contractions frequently and consistently, for example choosing *we've* instead of *we have* in the first part of this sentence. We did so because we wanted this handbook to have an informal, friendly tone. You can use contractions in your papers, but be aware that your tone will be more familiar, less formal. When deciding what degree of formality you want, think about your audience.

Shaping Your Sentences

Good writing depends on good sentences, sentences crafted so that design reinforces meaning instead of obscuring it. The first step towards achieving grace and eloquence in your prose is to work for conciseness. Getting rid of unnecessary words helps you to see the underlying shape of the sentence. Let's start there.

Economy
Don't waste space on windy repetition of the terms of the assignment. Is there anything worth preserving in the following sentence?

> There are many similarities and differences between Samuel Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

If you remove the names of the assigned texts and their authors, you're left with nothing but a meaningless statement that could refer to almost any two things in the world.

Don't clutter up your sentences with filler. Certain empty phrases like *there is* and *there are* seem to engender other clutter (many *which*'s and *that*'s, for example). In the following sentence, merely by deciding to get rid of *There is* you create a much stronger and more compact sentence:

> There is one tree central to the composition which is large and fills the picture space. (original, 16 words)

> One large tree, central to the composition, fills the picture space. (revision, 11 words)

Similarly, avoid useless repetition of words or phrases.

> In the border closer to the image, there is a crease which runs through the border about one inch. (original, 19 words)

> Closer to the image, a one-inch crease runs through the border. (revision, 11 words)

Avoid needlessly stringing together prepositional phrases (phrases headed by *of*, *about*, *in*, *on*, etc.). In the following example, you could use a combination of strategies to create a much leaner, more direct revision:

> One of the important chapters of the book that I find interesting is the one about the language of chimpanzees. (20 words, 4 prepositional phrases)

> The important chapter on chimpanzee language interests me. (8 words, 1 prepositional phrase)

Active and Passive Voice

You've probably noticed in most of the above examples that weak verbs like *is* and *was* often contribute to wordiness, especially if they're part of what we call passive constructions.

The English language contains two "verbal voices": passive and active. The active voice is usually more direct, concise, and vivid than the passive voice. In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence doesn't perform the action, but is acted upon by someone or something. The verb is always some form of the "to be" verb, such as *is*, *are, were*, and *was*. Here's a sentence in the passive voice:

> Most academic prose is marred by jargon.

To change this sentence to active voice, eliminate the "to be" verb, *is*, and turn the word that follows it into a "real" verb:

> Jargon mars most academic prose.

The real source of the action in the sentence often becomes clearer after revision from passive to active voice:

> *Lolita* was called a brilliant but obscene book.

Get rid of the "to be" verb, ask yourself who called *Lolita* brilliant but obscene, and you come up with:

> Critics called *Lolita* brilliant but obscene.

Even these brief examples show why the passive voice is wordier than the active voice. The passive voice may be appropriate, however, if the agent or the actor is unknown or unimportant:

> The reagent was added to the solution in the beaker.

> Louis Philippe was known as the Citizen King.

Be especially careful not to use the passive voice to give your own opinion spurious weight, as in:

> Coed schools are considered to be frivolous compared to Smith.

Parallel Structure

Parallel constructions – phrases or clauses within the same sentence that repeat the same grammatical structure – also help keep your prose tight. Using parallel structure almost always makes your sentences shorter, and at the same time provides emphasis, reinforces meaning, and clarifies relationships. The last half of the sentence you just read embodied parallel structure nicely. Compare it to the following awkward, wordy version:

> Parallel structure is usually economical, and it is emphatic, seems to reinforce meaning, and generally clarifies relationships.

In other words, parts of a sentence that are parallel in thought and function should also be parallel in form. For example, when you give a list or a series, all the items in the series should have the same grammatical form. Don't write this:

> A villain is usually dashing, courageous, appears to be wealthy, and in general a charmer.

Revise so that all the villain's attributes are adjectives:

> A villain is usually dashing, courageous, apparently wealthy, and charming.

When you make a comparison, be sure that the elements you're trying to compare are parallel. In the following example the writer intends to compare two novels:

> Like *Bleak House*, Joseph Conrad uses multiple narrators in *Lord Jim.*

But because of the way she's structured the sentence, she's actually comparing a novel with a novelist. A better way is to make the elements of the comparison parallel:

> Like Dickens's *Bleak House*, Conrad's *Lord Jim* uses multiple narrators.

Certain pairs of words require parallel construction: *both/and, either/ or, neither/nor, not only/but also*. Be sure that you place these pairs just before the parts of the sentence you mean to connect. This writer puts *not only* in the wrong place:

> He wants not only to live in the country but also by the sea.

Here *to live* introduces both of the phrases, or choices, so you should put *not only* after it:

> He wants to live not only in the country, but also by the sea.

Coordination, Subordination, and Emphasis

Some inexperienced writers produce sequences of short, choppy sentences, in beginning-reader style:

> Patroclus took Achilles' place in the fighting. He wore Achilles' armor. Patroclus represented Achilles.

The sentence rhythm is monotonous, and the jerky style makes it hard for your reader to see the connections between your ideas, or to tell which idea is most important. Combine the short sentences to indicate the relative importance of your ideas:

> By taking Achilles' place in the fighting and wearing his armor, Patroclus represented Achilles.

Here the writer has put the supporting ideas in a subordinate clause, the main idea in an independent clause. When two ideas are of equal importance, link them with a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, but, yet, for, nor, while*):

> Patroclus took Achilles' place in the fighting, while Achilles stayed near the hollow ships.

Avoid weak *and*'s that don't show logical relationships:

> In the first chapters, gray fog blankets everything, and Dickens begins to describe the Jarndyce lawsuit.

Show the connection:

> In the first chapters a blanket of gray fog obscures both
> London and the Jarndyce lawsuit.

The most interesting or important part of your sentence belongs at the end. How anti-climactic does the following sentence sound?

> Wrenching the crown from the hands of the Pope, Napoleon
> crowned himself in Notre Dame on December 2, 1804.

Much more effective is:

> On December 2, 1804, Napoleon crowned himself in Notre
> Dame, wrenching the crown from the hands of the Pope.

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Occasionally something goes wrong in a sentence that seriously interferes with meaning, or even creates an unintentionally comic effect. The biggest culprit in this area is probably the dangling or misplaced modifier.

A dangling modifier is a sentence part, usually a phrase or clause, that modifies no word or the wrong word in the sentence. Here's one:

> By using the first-person, the effect is more intimate.

The modifier is the clause before the comma. A reader expects that what the clause modifies or describes will occupy the position just after the comma, but here it doesn't. The *effect* isn't *using the first-person*; the author is. Since "the author" isn't in the sentence, the modifier dangles, with nothing to modify. A revision would say:

> By using the first-person, Dickens creates a more intimate
> effect.

Here are two more examples, with revisions, just to solidify the point:

> By analyzing the first document, it can be seen that . . .
> The document shows . . .

> In doing so, his strength and honor are maintained.
> His act maintains his strength and honor.

Sometimes the modifier doesn't dangle; it's simply in the wrong place. For example:

> Full of suspense, Dickens writes detective stories like *Bleak House*.

It's the book, not the author, that's full of suspense. Try:

> Dickens writes detective stories like *Bleak House*, full of suspense.

A relative of the dangling/misplaced modifier is the homeless *which* clause. For example:

> After his stormy childhood, he was unable to take advice from his uncles when he became king, which was very unfortunate.

What was unfortunate, that he became king, that he couldn't take advice, that his childhood was stormy? Rephrase and restructure:

> Unfortunately, his stormy childhood made him unable to accept advice from his uncles when he became king.

This can pose a similar problem, especially at the beginning of sentences. Usually the writer intends for the *this* to refer to some idea or vague combination of ideas that have appeared in the preceding sentence, as in:

> Dickens uses multiple narrators, complicated patterns of imagery, and suggestive names like Jellyby. This creates an effect of . . .

When you begin a new sentence with *This*, ask yourself if it's clear what noun would follow the *This*. If it isn't, revise! (See also the section in this handbook on Pronoun Reference.)

Choosing Verb Tenses

You may use several different verb tenses in the course of one paper, but every paper should have a main tense. Conventionally the main tense for

a paper that analyzes a text – be it a historical document, a poem, or an essay in political philosophy – is the present, but a mixture of tenses is correct if the context warrants it.

> Hershel *describes* in detail the Greek community he *studied* in Crete.

> Pummel *predicts* that small-scale economies *will thrive* in the 21st Century.

In both these examples the main tense is present, but the writer also uses the past and future tenses to describe time-bound events.

Similarly, in a paper that deals primarily with time-bound events, the main tense is usually past, but other tenses may be appropriate:

> The South *fough*t fiercely at Gettysburg, although historians *agree* that the rebel troops *lacked* the artillery reserves of the Union.

Here the verbs describing historical events (*fought* and *lacked*) are in the main tense, past, while the verb that refers to historical texts (*agree*) is present.

Be consistent, but not afraid to use a different tense when you need it.

GRAMMAR

Many people are uncomfortable about grammar because they've been frustrated by it in the past, and not without good reason, given the number of rules, their complexity, and all the terminology necessary to understand them. To complicate matters, there are probably more exceptions to the rules than there are rules. Comfort with the rules of grammar will make you a more fluent, confident writer, but if reading a rule doesn't help you, you may find it more useful to study the examples below. The following five sections should be used for reference if you have problems in any of these areas: sentence fragments or run-ons, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement, pronoun reference, and punctuation.

Fragments and Run-on Sentences

Correct grammar and usage won't by themselves make you a better writer, but errors in grammar and usage may stigmatize you. Errors in

sentence boundaries – fragments, run-on sentences – are among the most stigmatizing and may suggest incompetence or carelessness.

To understand sentence fragments and run-on sentences, you must first understand what constitutes a grammatically complete sentence (also commonly called a *main sentence* or an *independent clause*). First, at a minimum, a grammatically complete sentence must have a subject and a tensed verb that agrees with it:

>Chomsky gave an inspiring lecture.
>(*Chomsky* is the subject, *gave* the tensed verb)

Verb forms like *give*, *gives*, and *have given* carry tense. Verb forms like *to give* and *giving* do not, by themselves, carry tense, and thus do not, by themselves, make a sentence grammatically complete; they can, however, combine with other verb forms that do carry tense to make the sentence complete (*like to give*, *am giving*).

Second, a grammatically complete sentence must be able to stand alone. If a group of words starts with a subordinating word that makes it dependent on a main sentence (e.g. *after, although, because, since, when*), it cannot stand by itself.

>Since Chomsky gave an inspiring lecture.
>(ungrammatical, because *since* takes away the sentence's
>ability to stand alone)

Fragments

A fragment is a grammatically incomplete sentence. Sometimes an expression is a fragment because it lacks a subject and/or a tensed verb that agrees with the subject. Other times an expression is a fragment because it starts with a subordinating word that makes it dependent on a main sentence

>Chomsky gave an inspiring lecture. His best lecture ever on universal grammar. (the fragment lacks a tensed verb agreeing with a subject)

>Jane is very unhappy at MIT. Because she has become interested in sociolinguistics. (the fragment starts with a subordinating word that makes it dependent on a main sentence)

The best place to study linguistics. In my opinion it is not MIT but Stanford. (the fragment lacks a tensed verb agreeing with a subject – the infinitive verb *to study* carries no tense by itself)

Ways to Correct a Fragment

■   Use a comma instead of a period to connect the fragment to the main sentence.

Chomsky gave an inspiring lecture, his best lecture ever on universal grammar.

Jane is very unhappy at MIT, because she has become interested in sociolinguistics.

■   Add a subject and/or a tensed verb agreeing with it, making the fragment a complete sentence.

Chomsky gave an inspiring lecture. It was his best lecture ever on universal grammar.

■   Integrate the two sentences in an alternative, sensible way, tightening up the wordiness.

In my opinion, the best place to study linguistics is not MIT but Stanford.

Run-on Sentences

A *run-on sentence* is comprised of two sentences connected with no punctuation at all or with only a comma (the proverbial *comma splice*).

Jane used to study linguistics at MIT she attends Stanford now.

Jane used to study linguistics at MIT, she attends Stanford now.

Ways to Correct a Run-on Sentence

■ Place a period or a semicolon between the sentences. If the relationship between the two sentences is weak, you might also want to add a transitional word or expression (e.g. *consequently, however, thus, as a result*).

> Jane used to study linguistics at MIT. <u>However</u>, she attends Stanford now.

■ Place a comma and a coordinating word (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) between the sentences.

> Jane used to study linguistics at MIT, <u>but</u> she attends Stanford now.

■ Subordinate the first sentence with a subordinating word (e.g. *after, although, because, since, when*) and place a comma between the two elements.

> <u>Although</u> Jane used to study linguistics at MIT, she attends Stanford now.

Note: Only coordinating words – *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so,* easily remembered with the acronym FANBOYS – can connect two grammatically complete sentences with a comma. Other transitional words and expressions cannot, even when they have very similar meaning to the coordinating words (e.g. *and* can, but *in addition* cannot; *but* can, but *however* cannot). It's easier to remember the expressions that can than those that cannot, as the latter are too numerous.

Subject-Verb Agreement
Subject-verb agreement comes easily to most writers. Some situations are tricky, though, and lead to common errors. We'll focus on those.

■ Verbs always agree with their subjects, even when the subjects are far away.

> <u>The second entry</u> in this long list of books and articles <u>interests</u> me most.

Alert: Expressions like *as well as, in addition to, accompanied by, together with*, and *along with* do not affect subject-verb agreement.

> This book, together with the related articles, clarifies the situation for me.

■   Compound subjects (two subjects connected with *and*) take plural agreement.

> Professor Meyers and her assistant have completed their groundbreaking work.

■   Lists preceded by *each* and *every* take singular verbs.

> Every novel, play, and poem I read motivates me to become an English major.

However, lists followed by *each* take plural verbs.

> A novel, a play, and a poem each manifest a different use of language.

■   Verbs agreeing with compound *either...or/neither...nor* expressions agree with the element closest to them.

> Neither the book nor the journal articles help in understanding the Asian monetary crisis.
> (*help* agrees with *articles*, the closest element)

Tip: If one element is singular and one is plural, placing the plural second (closer to the verb) makes the sentence more idiomatic.

■   Indefinite pronouns almost always take a singular verb. Indefinite pronouns are words like *anybody*, *either*, *neither*, *somebody*, *anyone*,*everybody*, *nobody*, *someone*, *anything*, *everyone*, *none*, *something*, *each*, *everything*, *no one*.

> Everyone agrees that Tibet has undergone profound changes in recent history.

■   Collective nouns (nouns with a singular form referring to a group) take a singular verb.

The audience <u>applauds</u> on cue.

To emphasize each individual in the collective, the collective nouns can take a plural verb.

The audience <u>were</u> already pushing and shoving past each other when the curtain dropped.

Alert: The expression *the number* takes a singular verb, while *a number* takes a plural one.

The number of women with PhDs in computer science <u>is</u> small.
Consequently, <u>a number of scholars</u> <u>are</u> advocating for educational reform.

Units of measurement take a singular verb when they refer to a collective entity and a plural one when they refer to individuals.

<u>A quarter of the gas</u> <u>condenses</u> within 15 seconds.
<u>A quarter of the tests</u> <u>reveal</u> nothing that we don't already know.

■   Verbs never agree with their subject complements (the object-like expressions following the verb *to be*), even though you may feel a tendency to make them do so.

<u>Drafting and revising</u> <u>are</u> the best way to improve one's writing.

■   The titles of works and words written as words take a singular verb.

In conclusion, <u>*Sons and Lovers*</u> <u>deserves</u> a very high place in the literary canon.
<u>*Bats*</u> <u>is</u> the plural of *bat*.

Pronoun Reference

A pronoun is a word that stands for a noun. In this relationship, the noun is called the antecedent. Your reader must always know exactly what nouns your pronouns stand for. Generally, pronouns must refer to nouns either in the same sentence or in the one immediately preceding, no farther away than that. In other words, your pronouns should always have clear, unambiguous, specific antecedents that are close by. Be sure that your pronoun references are not even momentarily ambiguous, as this will obfuscate your meaning and distract the reader.

Weak: The Prime Minister informed the President that he should
                resign. (ambiguous: is *he* the Prime Minister or the
                President?)
Better: The Prime Minister advised the President to resign.

Weak: In the United Kingdom, they do not have a president.
                (unspecified antecedent: who is *they*?)
Better: The United Kingdom does not have a president.

Weak: The United Kingdom has a prime minister, who is very
                powerful, and this simplifies the political process. (vague
                antecedent: what does *this* refer to? Having a prime minister
                or the fact that he's very powerful?)
Better: The power of the British prime minister simplifies the political
                process.

Never use the same pronoun to refer to two different nouns in the same sentence or consecutive sentences:

Weak: The Girondists insisted on their fundamental principles, but
                their meaning was often unclear and contradictory. (*their* refers
                to the Girondists the first time, the principles the second)
Better: The Girondists insisted on their fundamental principles, but
                the meaning of these principles was often unclear and
                contradictory.

Avoid using a possessive noun as antecedent; your reference will always seem unclear.

Weak: Throughout Marx's *Kapital*, he affirms that …
Better: Throughout *Kapital*, Marx affirms that …

Lastly, there's a special class of pronouns called *relative pronouns* (e.g. *who, whom, which, that*). These pronouns introduce whole clauses that describe a noun. Make sure to place these pronouns right after (or as close as possible to) the nouns they describe.

Weak: The Prime Minister criticized the President in his speech, <u>who had, in fact, shown poor judgment</u>. (antecedent too far away: the President, not the speech, showed poor judgment)
Better: In his speech, the Prime Minister criticized the President, who had, in fact, shown poor judgment.

Remember that, except in formulae like "it is raining," pronouns should refer to an antecedent that your reader can locate quickly and easily.

Pronoun Agreement
Just about all native speakers (and most fluent non-native speakers) have good intuitions about correct grammar regarding simple pronoun-antecedent and subject-verb agreement rules; in other words, they know and observe the rules without knowing that they're doing it. However, some expressions present difficulties for all speakers, often because they're arbitrary but have nonetheless become enshrined in the standard language over the years. For these expressions, appealing to intuition doesn't always work, and often neither does appealing to form or meaning because these expressions are in fact so arbitrary. The expressions below usually present the greatest confusion in pronoun-antecedent agreement.

■   Indefinite pronouns take a singular pronoun, even though they may sometimes seem plural in meaning.

<u>Everyone</u> who thinks that <u>he or she</u> is depressed should consult a professional.

■   Generic nouns take singular pronouns.

<u>Every novelist</u> has <u>his or her</u> favorite characters.
<u>A smart novelist</u> nowadays should write <u>his or her</u> books for a multicultural market.

Tip: To avoid the wordiness of *he or she* without affecting the meaning of a sentence, pluralizing antecedents and subsequent pronouns usually works, in this case:

> Novelists have their favorite characters.
> Smart novelists nowadays should write their books for a
> multicultural market.

■   Collective nouns (nouns with a singular form referring to a group) take singular pronouns. Here are examples of collective nouns: jury, committee,audience, crowd, class, troupe, family, team.

> The family moved back to its hometown.

To stress individual members of the group, use a plural pronoun.

> After Jesse revealed her so-called news, the family scattered to
> their respective rooms.

■   Compound expressions connected by *and* take a plural pronoun.

> Freud and Jung quarreled and went their separate ways.

■   Pronouns referring to compound expressions connected by *or, nor, either...or*, and *neither...nor* agree with the closest element.

> Neither Chomsky nor his followers integrate sociolinguistics
> into their theories. (*followers* is closer to the pronoun than
> *Chomsky*)

Tips: When one element is singular and the other plural, placing the plural element second makes a more idiomatic sentence. When one element is male and the other is female, the sentence is almost always awkward. In these cases, revise the sentence using a different sentence structure.

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation helps you clarify how a sentence should be read. It's useful to think of the comma, the semi-colon, the colon, and the dash as signs that assist a reader in grasping where a sentence is going.

The Comma

The comma is primarily a separating device**.** Think of it as a road sign that signals to the reader the need to pause.

■   Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the main sentence.

If you don't like Kant, you certainly won't like Hegel.

■   Use a comma to separate items in a series (words, phrases, clauses). The last comma is optional.

Kant's works are difficult because of their complexity, their allusions, and their prose.

■   Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) that joins two complete sentences. (Some people use the acronym FANBOYS to remember these words.)

I can read Kant, but I can appreciate Hegel.

Alert: Pairs of words, phrases, or dependent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction should *not* be separated with a comma.

I like Kant and Hegel.

The Semi-Colon

The semi-colon is primarily a linking device used to join two complete sentences closely related in meaning. The two sentences are usually about the same length, too.

■   Use a semi-colon to join two complete sentences.

I understand Hegel; I admire Kant.

■   Use a semi-colon to join two complete sentences linked with a subordinating conjunction (*however, consequently, moreover,* etc).

> I understand Hegel; however, I admire Kant.

■   You can also use the semi-colon as a less confusing additional barrier between items that are already separated by commas.

> We study the Cavalier poets Lovelace, Carew, and Suckling; the metaphysical poets Donne, Cowley, and Crashaw; and the religious mystics Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne.

The Colon

The colon, like the dash and the semi-colon, is a linking device, but it signals a different relationship between the parts of the sentence. Also, what precedes a colon must be a complete sentence, that is, one that *could* stand alone as a sentence. Think of the colon as a kind of trumpet, a means to signal your reader that what comes before heralds something more important or specific after the colon.

■   Use the colon after a complete sentence to introduce, supplement, explain, or add something to what has already been said.

> I value these qualities above all: imagination, curiosity, and intellectual honesty.

■   Use a colon to introduce a quotation *only* when the clause that introduces the quotation is a complete sentence.

> *Silent Spring* sounded a warning about pesticides: "The most alarming of man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers and sea with dangerous, even lethal materials."

The Dash

The dash differs from the colon in that it doesn't require a complete sentence to precede it. Use the dash when the word or word group that follows it constitutes a summation, an amplification, a commentary, an

explanation, or a reversal of what went before. You can use the dash very effectively to create special, dramatic emphasis, but use it only very occasionally. Overuse of the dash can make your prose appear fragmented and incoherent.

> Over 104 pounds a year – this is how much sugar is in the average person's diet.

Use dashes in pairs to enclose abrupt parenthetical elements that occur within a sentence.

> Southern novelists – and Hemingway at his best – are the most important American writers of the post-war years.

The Apostrophe

Compared to the complicated possibilities of the comma, apostrophes should be easy. Usually an apostrophe and an added *s* indicate possession

> The <u>professor's</u> lecture was fascinating.

If the noun is singular and ends in *s*, add 's:

> James's notes are more detailed than mine.

But if the added *s* would look or sound awkward, use only the apostrophe:

> The professor noted Euripides' irony.

If the noun is plural, add only an apostrophe:

> The professors' vote against grade inflation was unanimous.

The primary confusion about the apostrophe arises with the distinction between *it's* and *its*. In contractions like *can't* and *haven't*, the apostrophe takes the place of missing letters; *can't* and *haven't* stand for *cannot* and *have not*. Use an apostrophe in *it's* if you mean *it is,* but not if you mean *its* in the possessive sense:

It's time to retire that lecture; *its* point is becoming
increasingly obscure.

Quotation Marks

Put double quotation marks around a person's spoken or written words:

As the professor sagely noted, "An educated electorate is the
heart of democracy."

Use single quotation marks only to enclose a quotation within a
quotation:

As the professor sagely noted, "An uneducated electorate cries
out 'educate me' to those who control its destiny."

Further discussion of punctuating quotations can be found in the section
Using Sources.

POLISHING AND PROOFING

If you've gotten this far, you're probably happy with your thesis and
unlikely to change your paper in fundamental ways. But the final
touches can seriously affect the impression your paper makes on a reader.
Here's a checklist:

√ Make sure your organization works well: The best way to do
this is to make a "post-writing outline." That is, write down, in sequence,
the main idea of each paragraph. These main ideas are the skeleton
of your argument: Are all the bones in the right places? Would a late
paragraph be more helpful if you moved it up to p. 1?

√ Presumably you've already carefully edited your paper (see the
appropriate sections of this handbook). If you haven't, do it now.

√ Don't make the mistake of allotting only a few minutes
for proofreading. When you've spent a lot of time and thought on a
paper, you don't want your reader's impression of it to be spoiled by
many annoying (even if trivial) errors. That kind of carelessness subtly
undermines your reader's confidence in you as a writer, so that even your
best ideas won't be as convincing as you thought they'd be.

√ Put some distance between yourself and the paper—time if you have it, space (physical or psychological) if you don't. Don't try to proofread just after you finish writing; at that point you're still too close to what you've written. You need to find a way to come back to it with fresh eyes.

√ Read slowly and read every word. Some people actually proofread backwards, or right to left, so they see each word not as part of a unit of meaning, but *as a word.* Others who don't quite have the patience for this technique separate the text into individual sentences by pressing the spacebar after each sentence.

√ Don't try to proofread for everything at once. Read through the paper for grammatical problems, then for punctuation, then for spelling. On the subject of spelling—don't rely on computer spell checks. If you mean "their" and write "there," the computer won't tell you. Pay special attention to the spelling of proper names: if you consistently spell Jane Austen's last name as "Austin," your English teacher may be too irritated to give your brilliant thesis about *Emma* the acclaim it deserves. Be sure you're spelling key terms correctly: your art history instructor may not applaud your point about angels and *putti* if you've called them "angles" and "*putty.*"

Did you number your pages?

THE RESEARCH PAPER

Most of the papers Smith students write are 2-6 pages and based on the writer's response to a given text or texts. Sometimes, however, you'll need to write a term paper or seminar paper. These genres represent other challenges besides greater length; you usually need to do extensive research before you can begin to develop a thesis or organize your evidence. The next two sections offer tips to make the research process manageable and productive**.**

RESEARCHING A TOPIC
Research is the scholarly investigation you need to understand your topic.

You might need to conduct this research by performing a laboratory experiment, conducting a survey, or reading information gathered using libraries' Web pages.   This section will help you plan for and organize your research, especially if you expect to use materials from the libraries and the World Wide Web.

Planning for Research

Before you begin your research, take a few moments to plan what you need to do.   Review the suggestions made earlier in this guide on "Getting Started" – especially those about understanding the length of your paper, the nature of your topic, and the importance of beginning early.

To prepare for effective computer searching you must think carefully about the language of your topic. Write down the key words and phrases that describe your subject so that you can search each one in the databases you'll encounter.

For example, researching a paper on the ethics of euthanasia might involve searching for some of the following terms:

> euthanasia
> death with dignity
> assisted suicide
> right to die

Sometimes reading an article from a scholarly encyclopedia will help you find the proper language as well as a bibliography of important books and articles. Ask a reference librarian to suggest an encyclopedia on your subject. For euthanasia the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* is one of several that would help you begin your research.

Being Flexible

Not all topics work. Some require resources that are hard to obtain or might not yet exist. An issue of interest in your California hometown might be difficult or even impossible to research in Massachusetts. A recent murder case might have resulted in only superficial news coverage and not in anything more substantive and appropriate for your paper.

Have a fallback position. If necessary you might work on another aspect of the same subject. Be prepared to shift your focus if experience shows that obtaining resources will prove too difficult or time-consuming.

Getting Help

Don't try to do everything yourself; successful researchers take advantage of all available help. You've already been advised to talk to your teacher about topic selection. Continue that process throughout your research, especially if your topic has changed.

Consult with a reference librarian as soon as you've decided upon your topic. Reference librarians at the Smith College libraries understand what you'll need for your assignments and expect to help you. In most cases a librarian or archivist can select the best databases or print sources in only a few minutes. If more time is needed the librarian will make a research appointment with you, spending as much time as is necessary to help you locate scholarly materials. Librarians also expect you to ask for help whenever you encounter any searching difficulties; they understand that this is how you'll learn to improve your research skills.

Keeping Track

To avoid duplication of effort, keep a log of where you've searched. Write down or print out complete information on every source you consult. Most photocopies of book chapters and journal articles don't contain this information. Write down anything needed for a footnote or bibliography onto a photocopy as soon as you get it. This may seem a bother, but you'll save time later when writing the paper.

Giving Credit

Always give proper credit in your citations and bibliography for any ideas or facts you use. Even if you don't use the same words as your source, give credit for others' ideas. If you aren't sure whether to cite, err on the side of doing so. Using another's ideas without giving credit – plagiarism – is an extremely serious offense to be avoided at all costs. For more on this topic see the section *Using Sources*. If you're unclear about a particular instance in your paper, talk to your teacher, a writing counselor, or a librarian.

The Right Stuff

Your teacher will expect you to use the most timely, reliable, and authoritative materials possible. These "scholarly" books, periodical articles, and documents usually share the following characteristics:

■   They're aimed at a specialized readership, not the general public.

■   They're written by experts in the field.

■   They're published by a scholarly association or university press.

■   They cite the sources for conclusions (i.e. footnotes and/or bibliographies).

■   They emphasize reasoned argument over emotional rhetoric.

The Wrong Stuff

By the time you do your first paper at Smith College, you'll already have had much experience searching the Internet for previous assignments and for pleasure. Although Web search engines are easy to use, they encounter firewalls that block access to much of the scholarly material described above. These firewalls exist to protect the legal rights and economic interests of authors and publishers. Once scholarly material has been excluded, what remains is often commercial, superficial, or biased. Never use a web page until you've discovered who maintains it and assured yourself of the objectivity, timeliness, and reliability of the information on that page.

Of course searching the Net can be a valuable asset in your work, but it isn't a substitute for locating the most reliable materials.

Subject Web Pages

The previous paragraphs discussed the importance of finding scholarly material for your paper and the limitations of using Internet search engines for this purpose. This section offers an alternative way of doing research using specially-designed subject Web pages.

Subject Web pages (sometimes called metapages) are guides to electronic resources, and usually contain links to most of the sites listed. Begin your search with the subject Web pages designed by the librarians at Smith. These are on the libraries' homepage.

There you'll find a subject Web page for every department and program at Smith College. The pages stress scholarly materials and contain links to special databases purchased for the use of Smith students. These are the best places for you to do your work.

For example, look at the subject Web page on Education. By using this page you can quickly locate books, articles, and some of the

most important Internet sites in the discipline. No matter what your topic, a page like this has been designed to help you.

Finding Books
Use books to give yourself a broad overview.

> To locate books:
> √ Go to the subject Web page relevant to your topic.
> √ Click on the Five College Library Catalog.
> √ Click on SUBJECT BEGINS WITH and search for your topic.
> √ If this fails, try searching under KEYWORD.
> √ If you find no relevant titles, ask a librarian for help.

If you find a large number of books, begin with recent titles published by scholarly organizations or university presses. If you find too few books, you might want to search in *WorldCat*, a database of literally millions of books in libraries around the world. This is a good idea, especially if you're writing a seminar paper or honors thesis.

Remember to consult the bibliographies and footnotes of any book you find. You may already have located dozens – even hundreds – of additional sources. If so, look for these sources in the Five College Library Catalog. Your library research may be all but finished.

Finding Articles
Use articles to give you timely, focused discussions of specific aspects of your subject. As with searching for books, consult a librarian within a few minutes if you don't find anything relevant. You may simply need to use different vocabulary or another database.

> To locate articles:
> √ Click on the subject Web page relevant to your topic.
> √ Go to the section devoted to "Articles."
> √ Select a database and search for your topic.
> √ If you are unfamiliar with a database, ask a librarian for help.

Some databases simply list sources, some give summaries (abstracts) of their articles, and others provide complete articles online. Expect that at least some important sources will be available only in printed form rather than online. Since your teacher expects you to read

the best resources, make your decision on what to use based upon the quality, timeliness, and relevance of the article – not on whether you can download it from your computer.

To see if a journal is available online click on the SC LINKS button next to a citation in a database or the "Find Journals" button on the libraries' homepage.

Finding Statistics and Other Facts
Start by looking at the libraries' "Research" page, which has links to dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, statistical sources, and much more. On this page you can also find suggestions on how to cite sources in the correct format. Be sure to ask your teacher about his or her expectations on which kind of style to use. The most common are American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), and *Chicago Manual* styles (see pp. 52-66 of this handbook), but many others may be substituted for these.

Getting Materials the Library Doesn't Own
No library owns everything, and you'll probably need to ask for a few items neither in the Smith College Libraries nor available online. If you need a book owned by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Hampshire, or Mount Holyoke College, you may request it online. To request books available in the Five Colleges:

√ Find the title in the Five College Library Catalog.
√ Click on "Request Item" at the top of the page.
√ Type your name and the 15-digit library barcode number
   on the back of your ID card.

If you need a book not owned by one of these schools or if you'd like a photocopy of an article, go to the Smith libraries' "Library Services" page and click on Interlibrary Loan. Ask the Interlibrary Loan staff for further assistance.

More Help
If you encounter trouble at any point in the research process, ask for help. If you're not already in a library you can e-mail or instant message your query using the "Needs Help" link on the Smith College Libraries' homepage. Your request will be answered promptly.

USING SOURCES
Using Sources Effectively

Whether your paper is a short one dealing with one or two texts or a long one incorporating research, you'll usually draw on at least three types of materials: your own thoughts and insights; commonplace knowledge (such as proverbs, fairytales, well-known historical facts, or standard information in a field of study); and the particular thoughts, insights, or words of someone else. This last category raises some special concerns that you'll want to think about as you revise: spend some time looking at the way you've used your sources**.**

When to Quote

Don't pack your paper with huge blocks of quotations or intersperse every sentence with quoted words and phrases. You'll drown out your own voice. Quote only when you can answer at least one of the following questions with yes:

> Are the words themselves at issue in your paper?
> Is the language of the source especially vivid, colorful or precise?
> Will paraphrase or summary lose or distort meaning?
> Will a direct quotation harness the authority of the source more effectively?
> Will the exact words reinforce emphatically what you've already said?

If you can't answer yes to any of these questions, a paraphrase of your source, properly acknowledged, is all you need.

When you quote, do it sparingly. Quote only as much as you're actually going to use. Don't quote a whole paragraph when all you are really interested in is a key phrase; don't reproduce a whole speech from Hamlet when you're only planning to discuss two or three lines.

How to Quote

When you do need the exact words, you must give them exactly as they're written. Never change, add, or leave out something without showing what you've done. The following quotation is from Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address":

> With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right
> as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we
> are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have
> borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may
> achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with
> all nations.

Indicate omissions in your quotations by substituting an ellipsis (three periods) for the words left out. For example:

> As Lincoln said, "With malice toward none, with charity for all … let
> us strive on to finish the work we are in."

Indicate additions or changes by using square brackets (not parentheses). For example:

> Lincoln hoped to help "him who shall have borne the battle [on either
> side] and … his widow and his orphan."

Often you'll need to make minor changes, like the omission of for in the preceding example, to make a quotation fit your sentence.
   Incorporate prose quotations of not more than four typed lines in your text, as we've done with the brief quotations from Lincoln above. Longer prose quotations should be indented one inch from the left margin. For example:

At the beginning of his speech, Lincoln refers to his first address four years before:

> On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were
> anxiously directed to an impending war. All dreaded it, all sought to
> avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this
> place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent
> agents were in the city seeking destroy it without war—seeking to dis-
> solve the Union and divide effects by negotiation.

Omit quotation marks around indented material.
   If you're quoting poetry, include brief quotations, a line or less, in quotation marks in your sentence.   For example:

> The alliteration in "Then shall the fall further the flight in me" under

lines the Christian paradox Herbert is exploring in "Easter Wings."

Two or three lines can also be included in your text. Separate the lines with a spaced slash and retain the capitalization of the original. For example:

> In "Easter Wings" Herbert hopes "to rise / As larks, harmoniously, / And sing this day thy victories."

If you need to quote more than three lines, indent one inch from the left margin and reproduce the exact structure and punctuation of the source. The indentation indicates a quotation; quotation marks are not necessary. For example:

The speaker senses a benign curiosity in the "otherworldly" moose and reports her fellow travelers' wonder with Bishop's characteristic qualification and under-statement:

> Taking her time,
> She looks the bus over,
> Grand, otherworldly,
> Why, why do we feel
> (we all feel) this sweet
> sensation of joy? (st. 26, ll. 1-6)

Notice the citation: *st.* abbreviates stanza, *l.* line, *ll.* more than one line.

Integrating Your Sources

Be sure that your reader always knows the relationship between your sources and your own argument. If you agree with the quoted author, make that clear. For example, you could introduce the quotation by saying "As Johnson wisely notes, ..." If you're skeptical, try "Johnson jumps to the conclusion that. . . ."   Don't expect your reader to see the quoted material in the same light that you do; your responsibility is to guide the reader by telling her what <u>you</u> make of it for purposes of <u>your</u> argument.

On the stylistic level, integrate your sources smoothly with your own sentences. For example:

> The review concluded with "Given Dickinson's popularity, a new edition of her work is likely."

The unfortunate conjunction of "with" and "Given" is something you probably wouldn't put up with in your own prose; don't let it get by just because you're working with a quotation. A better choice would be "that."

You don't need special punctuation just because you're quoting; punctuate as if the quoted material were your own. In the following example, the comma after "that" is superfluous:

> Johnson claims that, "Jones is a true protectionist."

You'll probably introduce most of your quotations with verbs like *claims, says, states*, *asserts, writes, notes*. As a rule, if you use *that* after these verbs, don't use a comma (as in the above example). If you omit *that*, use a comma after the verb for clarity. (See the section of the handbook on punctuation for more discussion of quotations and punctuation.)

Acknowledging and Documenting Your Sources

You have no obligation to acknowledge your own ideas and insights, of course, nor is it necessary to acknowledge commonplace information readily available to anyone.

If such information is at all controversial or its origins problematic, however, you must acknowledge. For example, in most contexts the population of Iowa would be common information, but if your paper's context suggests census tampering and political scandal, your reader needs to know the source of the population figures you use.

You must always cite your source when you quote even a few words (and of course those words must be in quotation marks).

You must always cite your source when you paraphrase or summarize someone else's ideas or observations. For example, here's an original source, Simpson's *The Circle of Futility*:

> The culture's sense of itself as freestanding, as detached and remote from history, has made the country unusually vulnerable to fraudulent economic schemes and discredited political agendas.

Here's an unacceptable paraphrase:

> The culture sees itself as freestanding, remote from history, which makes the country frequently vulnerable to disreputable

> political schemes and dishonest economic agendas.

The writer has merely moved a few words around, found synonyms for others, and is passing off the idea as her own.

A more responsible writer would acknowledge the source and express the idea in her own words, indicating that she's really digested it:

> As Simpson points out in *The Circle of Futility*, because the country has always failed to acknowledge its place in history, it has never been able to learn from it and to avoid failed ideas and institutions (42).

> When in doubt, cite!

How to Acknowledge

Different disciplines use different formats or styles for citing sources. English, for example, uses the style of the Modern Language Association (MLA), while psychology and most other social sciences use the style of the American Psychological Association (APA). History and art history usually use the style prescribed in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. While all styles of citation share the common purpose of acknowledging the debt and enabling the reader to locate the exact source of the information, styles differ markedly in form and arrangement. When in doubt, ask your teacher what style you should use. After a few words about plagiarism, we provide guidelines to the MLA, APA, and Chicago styles, including the citation of electronic sources.

Plagiarism

"Prohibited Conduct," according to the Smith College *Student Handbook*, includes "plagiarism and all forms of academic dishonesty" (http://www.smith.edu/sao/handbook/socialconduct/prohibited.php). The authors add, "Smith College expects all submitted work . . . to be the original work of the student author and to acknowledge all sources of information used in compiling the work [including] another student's materials; any research, published or otherwise, not done by the student; any material found on the Internet" (http://www.smith.edu/sao/handbook/socialconduct/honorcode2.php).

Note the quotation marks and the citation. In this case we can't be sure who set down the precise words of the Smith College Academic Honor Code, since the code is not the product of a single individual but

an institution. And yet if we wish to avoid the charge of plagiarism, we must acknowledge what we've borrowed, word for word, idea by idea. You can't just change a word or phrase here and there and call it your own.

Plagiarism is not an arcane notion bandied about by fuddy-duddies. Plagiarism has always been with us, and always will be. As the authors of the first *Writing Papers* put it, "*Plagiarism* comes from the Latin word *plagiarius*, which originally meant kidnapper and then was extended to cover literary or scholarly 'kidnapping' of ideas or phrases as well" (42).

No matter how much we might like to take credit for the above idea, the credit is due those who did the actual writing, those who showed the enterprise (and mobility) to rise from their desks and walk to the library to look up the etymology of plagiarism.

If the notion of "walking to the library" strikes you as old-fashioned, read on. The technology of reading and writing has made inexorable, sometimes spectacular advances, but all the while the temptation to borrow from the work of others has remained constant. That's because succumbing to such a temptation is a human failing, not a technological glitch.

The growth of the Internet is a case in point. What could be easier, after all, than to park your mind in neutral and to use a search engine such as Google to glean from the ever-expanding universe of research on the Internet? A few clicks of the mouse later, a few strokes of the keyboard, and – presto – instant ideas and instant prose.

But, as surely as the Internet giveth, so too the Internet taketh away. For every "Paper Mill" Web site from which an ethically impaired student can download a research paper, there are Web sites that offer "detection" services, such as Plagiserv or Glatt Plagiarism Services. Don't think that your teachers are unaware of these services. A medieval scholar may have his or her mind on the Cathedral of Chartres, a mathematician may be consumed by the enigma of infinity, but they have access to the same Internet you do.

In the never-ending race between the meticulous, slow-but-steady scholar and the fleet-footed plagiarist, sooner or later the scholar wins the day. Just ask some of America's most popular historians who have found themselves embarrassed when passages in their work were found to have been copied verbatim from other sources – without acknowledgment!

Some of these historians have claimed that their research assistants committed the crime – and just where did the assistants come from, we might ask? Chances are good that those assistants were recent graduates of colleges much like this one, and that for them the distinction between "taking inspiration" and "taking liberties" had become blurred.

So let's get it straight. Readers of texts by students and popular historians alike have a right to expect footnotes or similar documentation for the following kinds of borrowing:

- All word-for-word quotations (except common sayings)
- All passages you've summarized or paraphrased
- All theories or interpretations that aren't your own
- All key words or terms you've taken from a specific source

Yes, in a busy world filled with imminent deadlines and pressure to produce top quality material, the temptation lies ready at hand for quick cut-and-paste solutions. That degree of pressure, those types of deadlines are the reasons why it is harder for students or for scholars, indeed for all of us, to remain vigilant.

Look at the temptation to plagiarize as a challenge to your personal integrity. Or, for those who are less high-minded about these things, consider the consequences for your status in school.

MLA, APA, AND *CHICAGO MANUAL* STYLES

MLA Style

When you write papers in the humanities – literature, philosophy, and religion, among other disciplines – you need to follow the reference guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA).

MLA style requires an in-text citation, also known as a parenthetical citation, which includes only enough information to allow the reader to identify the source. Ideally you should identify the author in the sentence that introduces the source; this enables you to keep the parenthetical material brief. The full bibliographic detail for that source is then listed in a "Works Cited" page.

In-Text Citations

As Austen shrewdly points out, "a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"(1).

Works Cited List

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Egerton, 1813.

Formatting Quotations

Short quotations of no more than four lines should be placed in double quotation marks and incorporated into the text. If the material quoted is poetry, indicate the line breaks with a slash mark:

We recognize many familiar lines from Shakespeare, such as "The quality of mercy is not strained,/ It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven" (*The Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.184-5).

Note that the parenthetical citation identifies the specific play as well as the act, scene, and line numbers.

If a quotation runs to more than four lines, it should be set off from the text in a free-standing block indented one inch from the left margin. Subsequent lines should be flush with the first line and double-spaced. Quotation marks are not necessary because the format itself makes clear to the reader that you're quoting directly. Here's an example:

Many scholars, including Wilson himself, have commented on the agency's corruption. As he points out,

> it has falsified records, assassinated reputations, maligned innocent bystanders, and risked its own people. Reorganization is hopeless; the agency is rotten to the core and needs to be abolished, and the whole question of its purpose should be re-thought. But at this point such a refreshing prospect seems unlikely. Too many people in power have too high a stake in its continuation; too few people who might actually force a confrontation have the will to do so. (422)

The punctuation preceding a block quotation varies. If the sentence preceding the quotation is complete, use a colon. If the sentence is incomplete, punctuate as you would if the sentence and the quotation were straight uninterrupted text.

MLA Guide

1. Book with One Author

In-Text Citation Form
Either
Van Horne claims that the biggest problems in Appalachia are ecological (46).
Or
The biggest problems in Appalachia are ecological (Van Horne 46).

Works Cited Form
Van Horne, Robert. *Coal Mines and Floods: A History of Breathitt County, Kentucky*. Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1989.

2. Two or More Works by the Same Author

In-Text Citation Form
Either
In *Coal Mines and Floods*, Van Horne asserts that ecology is Appalachia's biggest problem (46).
Or
Van Horne asserts that ecology is Appalachia's biggest problem (*Coal Mines* 46).

Works Cited Form (arrange alphabetically by title)
Van Horne, Robert. *Coal Mines and Floods: A History of Breathitt County, Kentucky.* Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1989.
---. *Feuds of Southeastern Kentucky*. Jackson, KY: Pippa Passes Press, 1994.

3. Two or Three Authors

In-Text Citation Form
Either
Smith and Wesson repeatedly point out that only the researchers know the results (49).
Or
Only the researchers know the results (Smith and Wesson 49).

Works Cited Form
Smith, Peter, and Asa Wesson. *Loaded Guns*. Springfield, MA: Hill,
        1988.

4. Four or More Authors

In-Text Citation Form
(Gates *et al.* 321)

Works Cited Form
Either
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., Anthony P. Griffin, Donald E. Lively, Robert
        C. Post, William Rubenstein, and Nadine Strossen. *Speaking
        of Race, Speaking of Sex: Hate Speech, Civil Rights and Civil
        Liberties*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
Or
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *et al. Speaking of Race, Speaking of Sex:
        Hate Speech, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties*. New York: New
        York University Press, 1994.

5. Citing a Work in an Anthology

In-Text Citation Form
(Szwed 425)

Works Cited Form
Szwed, John F. "The Ethnography of Literacy." *Literacy: A Cultural
        Sourcebook*. Ed. Ellen Cushman. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins,
        2000. 421-429.

6. A Book with an Editor

In-Text Citation Form
(Bryson 22)

Works Cited Form
Bryson, Bill, ed. *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*. Boston:
        Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

7. Article in a Scholarly Journal

In-Text Citation Form
(Hayakawa 367)

Works Cited Form
Hayakawa, S. I. "Mr. Eliot's Auto Da Fe." *Sewanee Review* 42 (1934):
        365-72.

8. Article in a Newspaper

In-Text Citation Form
(Hakim 1)

Works Cited Form
Hakim, Danny. "Talking Green vs. Making Green." *New York Times* 28
        Mar. 2000:   B1+.

9. *Citing Electronic Sources*

In-Text Citation Form
(Glickman par. 5)

Works Cited Form
Glickman, Lawrence B. "The Strike in the Temple of Consumption:
        Consumer Activism and Twentieth-Century American Political
        Culture." *The Journal of American History* 88.1 (2001): 45 pars.
        28 Mar. 2002 <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/
        jah/88.1/glickman.html>

APA Style
When you write papers in the social sciences—psychology, sociology,
anthropology, and political science, among others—you need to follow
the reference guidelines of the American Psychological Association
(APA).
        APA style makes use of both an in-text citation, also known as a
parenthetical note, and an entry for a final "References" page.

In-Text Citations
In her study of refugee life, Nguyen (1993) examined the difficulties faced by new immigrants suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

References Entry
Nguyen, T. (1993*). Regret and resilience: A South East
          Asian refugee community study.* San Francisco: Human
          Science Press.

Formatting Quotations
Short quotations of fewer than 40 words should be incorporated into the text and enclosed with double quotation marks. Always provide the author, year, and page number of the text and include a complete reference in the reference list.

Weinstein (1987) wrote that the twinship transference is "perhaps the most profound opportunity offered to a patient in group therapy" (p. 150).

They argue, "It is the rare contemporary practitioner who posits that psychotherapy can be value-neutral" (Norcross and Wogan, 1987, pp. 5-6), but they offer no viable proof.

     Long quotations of 40 words or more should be set off in a free-standing block of typewritten lines and the quotation marks should be omitted. A block quotation should begin on a new line and be indented one-half inch from the left margin. Subsequent lines should be typed flush with the indent. If your paper is doubled-spaced, the entire quotation should be double-spaced.

     Beck's (1995) thesis explored why students selected either an MSW

degree or one in psychology:

          The findings of the research show that, in general, both

          groups had considered other career paths and expressed a

          desire to help people. The social work students tended to be

          motivated by the desire to relate to clients, stemming from

          childhood experience. This group valued understanding clients

> in a broader social context. In contrast, psychology students
>
> tended to be motivated by a curiosity about human behavior,
>
> stemming from their high school or college experience. This
>
> group was more likely to value science, testing and research.
>
> (p.i)

The punctuation preceding a block quotation varies. If the sentence preceding the quotation is complete, use a colon. If the sentence is incomplete, punctuate as you would if the sentence and the quotation were straight uninterrupted text.

APA Guide

1. Book With One Author

In-Text Citation Form
(Kendall, 1982, p. 14)

Reference List Form
Kendall, G. (1998). *Family fictions*. Washington, DC: American
      Dynamics Publishing.

2. Two or More Books by the Same Author

In-Text Citation Form
(Sullivan, *Adolescent awakenings*, 1999, p. 77)
(Sullivan, *Issues in geriatrics*, 2002, p. 106)

Reference List Form (arrange by year of publication, earliest first)
Sullivan, G. (1999). *Adolescent awakenings*. Chicago: Lincoln Park
      Press.
Sullivan, G. (2002). *Issues in geriatrics*. Chicago: Lincoln Park Press.

3. Book With Two to Six Authors

In-Text Citation Form
(Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 1995, p. 18)

Note: For works with two authors, cite both authors' names every time you make an in-text citation note. For works with three to five authors, cite all authors for your first in-text citation; after that, cite only the name of the first author followed by *et al*.

(Garrod *et al.*, 1995, p. 24)

Reference List Form
Garrod, A., Smulyan, L., Powers, S. & Kilkenny, R. (1995). *Adolescent portraits:Identity, relationships and challenges.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

4. Book With More Than Six Authors

In-Text Citation Form
(Dubay *et al.*, 2001, p.7)

Reference List Form
Dubay, S., Szumowski, W., Kline, K., Kent, A., Del Toro, B., Pem, P., *et al*. (2001). *Multilingual and multi-generational: Living in tongues.* Los Angeles: New Century Press.

5. Book by a Corporate Author

In-Text Citation Form
In the text, provide the complete name of the text and the association that published it when you first mention it. After that, you can refer to the name of the text.

Reference List Form
American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.).* Washington, DC: Author.

(This shows that the Association is both the author and the publisher.)

6. Article or Chapter in an Edited Book

In-Text Citation Form
(Salvatore, 1996, pp. 310 – 330)

Reference List Form
Salvatore, N. A. (1996). Increased visual acuity in deafened mice. In
        C. D. Smithson (Ed.), *Sensory perceptions in mammals* (pp. 310
        – 330). New York: Science Center Publications.

7. Article in a Scholarly Journal

In-Text Citation Form
(Brannock & Chapman, 1990, pp. 7 – 13)

Reference List Form
Brannock, J.C., & Chapman, B.E. (1990). Negative sexual experiences
        with men among heterosexual women and lesbians. *Journal of
        Homosexuality*, *19*, 105-110.

8. Secondary Sources

In-Text Citation Form
If you're quoting a source that's quoted in another source, phrase the
citation in the following way:

Perma and Davis (as cited in Cancela, 1991) suggested that "when working with
young women, therapists should focus on the ambiguities of defining modern
feminity" (p. 201).

Reference List Form
Cancela, B. (1991). Gender constructions and complexities in a post-
        modern age. *Enigma, 45,* 201.

9. Article in a Newspaper, Author Named

In-Text Citation Form
(Agemondo, 2001)

Reference List Form
Agemondo, B. (2001, November 17). Coping skills on view in city
        school. *The Pittsfield Daily*, pp. A1, A3.

10. Article in a Newspaper, No Author Named

In-Text Citation Form
("Coping Skills on View," 2001)

Reference List Form
Coping skills on view in city school. (2001, November 17). *The Pittsfield Daily*, pp. A1, A3.

11. Electronic Sources

In-Text Citation Form
(Trout, 1999)

Reference List Form
Trout, A. (1999). The science of a smile. *Studies in Physiognomy*. Retrieved December 13, 2001, from http://www.studiesinpysi/dec01/sciencesmile.html

The Chicago Manual of Style

When you write papers in some disciplines in the humanities—especially in history and art history—you may sometimes be asked to follow the reference guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Unlike the MLA and APA styles, which cite sources using parenthetical notes, *The Chicago Manual of Style* uses footnotes or endnotes. If you use footnotes, the bibliographic information should be placed at the "foot" or the bottom of the page on which it appears. If you use endnotes, it should be placed at the end of the paper in numerical order.

The Chicago Manual uses one form for presenting information in footnotes/endnotes and another form for presenting information in the final "Bibliography" page. Make sure you don't confuse them.

Footnotes/Endnotes

The first citation of a footnote/endnote should be denoted by a superscript 1 (raised numeral) placed at the end of the material it supports. The numeral comes after any mark of punctuation. Each subsequent citation should be numbered consecutively throughout the

paper. If you're using Microsoft Word, the program will superscript footnote/endnote numerals and keep track of the sequencing, but you do need to choose between footnotes and endnotes.

Indent the first line of each footnote/endnote entry. *The Chicago Manual* suggests five spaces; we suggest one-half inch for easy formatting. Subsequent lines should go out to the established margin.

Footnote/Endnote Entry

Barbara A. Kellum is especially interested in "what we do *not* see in considering narrative and meaning on the Ara Pacis Augustae."[1]

     1. Barbara A. Kellum, "What We See and What We Don't See. Narrative Structure and the Ara Pacis Augustae," *Art History* 17, no. 1 (1994): 28.

Subsequent citations should be abbreviated. Give the author's last name, a short form of the title, and the page number(s).

     2. Kellum, "What We See," 29.

Place the short form of the title of an article in quotation marks. Italicize the short form of the title of a book.

Bibliography

The Chicago Manual of Style uses the title "Bibliography" for the final page offering full bibliographical information for all sources cited in a paper. (MLA uses the title "Works Cited.") Entries should be alphabetized according to the last names of the authors. A work for which no author's name is given is alphabetized according to the first word of the title (disregarding "A," "An," or "The"). You should include every work—articles, books, Web sites, primary sources—that supplied valuable information for your paper.

Begin each entry at the left hand margin, and if it's necessary to carry it over to a subsequent line, use a hanging indent; that is, each additional line in that entry should be indented one-half inch. Single-space within each entry and double-space between entries.

Bibliography Entry

Kellum, Barbara A. "What We See and What We Don't See. Narrative
	Structure and the Ara Pacis Augustae." *Art History* 17, no. 1
	(1994): 26-45.

Formatting Quotations

Short, direct prose quotations should be incorporated into the text and
enclosed in double quotation marks. Here's an example:

Newbury acknowledges that the conflicts in central Africa in the early 1990s
were in some ways interdependent, but argues that "although political tension
and violence in each country clearly exacerbated violence in the others, each
one also had deep local roots."[5]

If a quotation runs to more than four lines, it should be set off in a
free-standing block that's indented one-half inch from the left margin.
Subsequent lines should be typed flush with the first and double-spaced.
Quotation marks aren't necessary because the format itself makes clear
to the reader that you're quoting directly. The following is an example:

Newbury offers a compelling justification for examining the intersection
of history and politics as a useful context for understanding convergent
catastrophes such as those in Central Africa:

> I am concerned with how history is used to aggravate rather than
> diminish the intensity of these crises. A clear grasp of the historical
> record may help to reduce tensions. I focus in particular on the
> nature of boundaries and ethnicities, on territorial and cultural
> classifications. Moreover, I explore how a rigid concept of these forms
> of categorization —which, I argue, are historically flexible concepts—
> can abet conflict.[6]

The punctuation preceding a block quotation varies. If the sentence
preceding the quotation is complete (as above), use a colon. If a
sentence is incomplete, punctuate as you would if the sentence and
quotation were straight uninterrupted text.

Chicago Manual of Style Guide

1. A Book with One Author

In Footnote/Endnote Form
        1. Joachim W. Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire : The Conflict over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 99.

In Bibliography Form
Stieber, Joachim W. *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire: The Conflict over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church.* Leiden: Brill, 1978.

2. Two or Three Authors

In Footnote/Endnote Form
        2. Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English* (London: Penguin, 1992), 49.

In Bibliography Form
McCrum, Robert, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil. *The Story of English*. London: Penguin, 1992.

3. Work in an Anthology

In Footnote/Endnote Form
        4. Ray Harlow, "Some Languages Are Not Good Enough," in *Language Myths*, ed. Peter Trudgill (London: Penguin, 1998), 10.

In Bibliography Form
Harlow, Ray. "Some Languages Are Not Good Enough." In *Language Myths*, edited by Peter Trudgill, 9-14. London: Penguin, 1998.

4. Article in a Journal

In Footnote/Endnote Form

     3. Douglas L. Patey, "Aesthetics and the Rise of Lyric in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature* 33, no. 3 (1993): 598.

In Bibliography Form

Patey, Douglas L. "Aesthetics and the Rise of Lyric in the Eighteenth Century." *Studies in English Literature* 33, no. 3 (1993): 588-608.

5. Article in an Electronic Journal

In Footnote/Endnote Form

     12. Judith Egan and Patricia M. Bikai, "Archaeology in Jordan," *American Journal of Archaeology* 104, no. 3 (2000), par. 12, http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00029114%28200007%29104%3 3%3C561%3AAIJ%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S.

In Bibliography Form

Egan, Judith, and Patricia M. Bikai. "Archaeology in Jordan." *American Journal of Archaeology* 104, no. 3 (2000), http://links. jstor.org/sici?sici=00029114%2820000 7%29104%3A3%3C561 %3AAIJ%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S.

6. Article in a Popular Magazine

In Footnote/Endnote Form

     6. Andrew Zimbalist, "All Right All You Lawyers, Play Ball," *Business Week*, April 15, 2002, 108.

In Bibliography Form

Zimbalist, Andrew. "All Right All You Lawyers, Play Ball." *Business Week*, April 15, 2002, 108-109.

7. Article in a Newspaper

In Footnote/Endnote Form

     7. Jason DeParle, "Border Crossings," *New York Times*, September 7, 2007, A3.

In Bibliography Form
DeParle, Jason. "Border Crossings." *New York Times*, September 7, 2007,
    A3.

8. Lectures

In Footnote/Endnote Form
    10. Jon D. Levenson, "How Monotheism Unites - and Divides
- Jews, Christians, and Muslims" (lecture, Smith College, Northampton,
MA, September 25, 2008).

In Bibliography Form
Levenson, Jon D. "How Monotheism Unites - and Divides - Jews,
    Christians, and Muslims." Lecture, Smith College, Northampton,
    MA, September 25, 2008.

9. Web Site

In Footnote/Endnote Form
    11. Pamela Petro, *Petrograph Gallery*, http://www.petrographs.
blogspot.com.

In Bibliography Form
Petro, Pamela. *Petrograph Gallery*. http://www.petrographs.blogspot.
    com.

Note: *The Chicago Manual of Style* doesn't advise including the date
you accessed a Web source, but you may provide an access date after the
URL if the information is time-sensitive.

When no author is named, treat the site's sponsor as the author.

APPENDIX

This section discusses briefly three specific genres: the summary, the comparison/contrast essay, and the essay exam. All present special challenges.

Summarizing

A summary is a condensed version of a longer piece of writing. It includes only the main points of the original text. It should be written in your own words, but it shouldn't include your personal insights or reactions.

Your teacher may assign a summary essay—for example, you might be asked to summarize an article from an economics journal or chapter from a historical novel. More often, though, a writing task might involve including a summary as part of an essay.   Including a brief summary in your essay can provide some helpful background to a reader who is not familiar with the text.

When writing a summary, begin by introducing the text and stating its main point or thesis. Then move on to articulate the important supporting points in the order that they appear in the article or essay. Use subheadings and topic sentences to help you determine these main points. Although a summary can borrow some key words from the original text, it generally doesn't include minor details or quotations—remember, it needs to be written in your own words. However, illustrations or examples from the text would be appropriate if they make the summary more vivid or clear. Finally, a summary usually doesn't require a conclusion.

Comparison and Contrast

The comparison-and-contrast essay is a frequently assigned paper topic: compare two texts, three political positions, two solutions to a problem, three pieces of art. Essay exams frequently take this form too: compare Plato and Aristotle's theories of education.

When you're asked to compare and contrast, your goal is to construct an argument based on a discussion of the similarities and/or differences in two or more texts, theories, or objects. Simply pointing out or listing the similarities and differences is not enough; you also need to state why these similarities/differences matter. For example, in a religion paper you might begin by comparing and contrasting how two religious texts approach the idea of the self, but then move on to formulating a

thesis about what role the self plays in achieving enlightenment. Giving equal time to the items being compared isn't always an issue. In fact, some of the best comparisons use one text, position, or object to shed light on another, the second being the more important or focal item.

When writing a comparison-and-contrast essay, you should begin with an introductory paragraph that introduces the items and includes a clear thesis statement about them. In some cases, depending on your material and your audience, a brief summary of the items might also be appropriate.

You can organize the body of the comparison-and-contrast essay either point-by-point or subject-by-subject. In the first pattern of organization, point-by-point, you would discuss one assertion about both subjects, then another, and another. Here's an example:

Introduction (Thesis: In the past ten years, flexibility in several key areas has helped private businesses be more successful in achieving their diversity goals than public institutions.)
        A. Recruitment
            1.Private businesses
            2.Public institutions
        B. Training
            1.Private businesses
            2.Public institutions
        C. Compensation
            1.Private businesses
            2.Public institutions
    Conclusion

This pattern of organization would be best if, for example, you want to highlight the distinct differences or similarities of your subjects—in this case, how more flexibility in recruitment, training, and compensation helped private businesses be more successful in achieving their diversity goals.

In the second pattern of organization, subject-by-subject, you would discuss all your assertions about one subject and then all your assertions about the second subject, constantly referring to the first. You should treat the assertions in the same order. Here's an example:

Introduction
   A. Private businesses
      1. Recruitment
      2. Training
      3. Compensation
   B. Public institutions
      1. Recruitment
      2. Training
      3. Compensation
Conclusion

This method works best when one of your subjects is less important or less interesting than the other, or when you are primarily interested in it in terms of how it can illuminate the item which does seem more important, or focal. Get the first item out of the way quickly and concentrate on the second one. Be careful, however, to refer back periodically to your first subject in the discussion of your second subject and to include the first subject in your conclusion.

Writing Essay Exams

An essay written for an exam should have all the virtues of a good paper: it should take a position early on; it should be well organized; it should provide sound evidence for its claims or positions; and it should use language well. For both essay exams and papers, the secret to success is in large part how well you prepare.

      Many students prepare for essay exams by simply reading their notes over and over. But will the exam test how well you read? No. It will test how well you think and write. Just as you pre-write before starting a paper, review for your exam by *writing* about the material. Make a list of the most important points. Anticipate what the questions are likely to be (usually you can come pretty close) and write practice paragraphs. These activities loosen up the vocabulary you need and also uncover weak spots where you don't remember or understand something well enough to write about it.

      When you take the exam, if the question asks you to take a position, be sure you make that position clear in your very first sentence, and if possible, indicate what sort of evidence you'll use to support it. For example, if the question is "Which president had the more effective

foreign policy, Richard Nixon or George H.W. Bush?" let your first sentence read "Nixon [or Bush] was by far the more effective president in the area of foreign policy because 1) he had a deeper understanding of how global economics worked; 2) he insisted that his State Department be staffed by career diplomats with a solid understanding of historical issues; and 3) he was fortunate enough to be president at a time when many opportunities for diplomatic breakthroughs presented themselves."

An opening sentence like this does several things. First, it puts your basic answer on record even if you run out of time and can't develop it as completely as you might have liked. Second, it provides you with an outline to follow. Third, it reassures your reader that you've understood the question and provided a thoughtful answer; the reader can actually pay attention to your presentation from the beginning rather than skimming to see where you're headed.